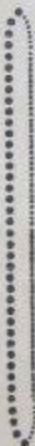


THE CRUISE
OF THE 'WALRUS'
ON THE BROADS

ARTHUR H. PATTERSON



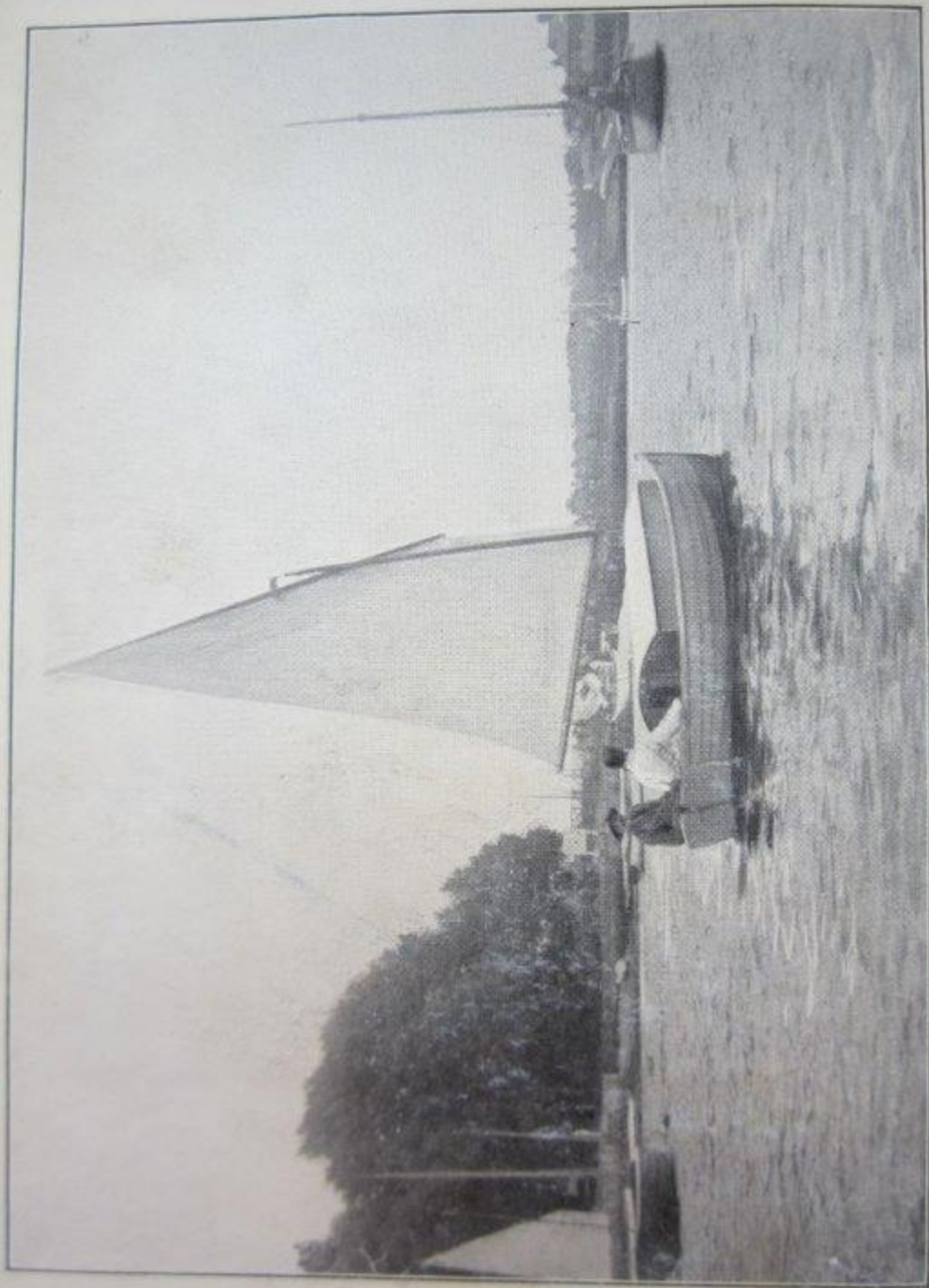
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THE CRUISE OF THE "WALRUS"



THE GOOD SHIP "WALEUS"

THE CRUISE OF THE "WALRUS" ON THE BROADS

A BROADLAND VOYAGE IN
A NORTH SEA KETCH-BOAT

BY
ARTHUR H. PATTERSON

AUTHOR OF "THROUGH BROADLAND IN A BREYDON PUNT," "WILD LIFE
ON A NORFOLK ESTUARY," "NATURE IN EASTERN NORFOLK," ETC.

WITH PEN AND INK SKETCHES BY THE AUTHOR



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TO
MY MANY VALUED FRIENDS
AMONG THE CITIZENS OF NORWICH
I DEDICATE
THIS LITTLE VOLUME

"Our intellectual and active powers increase with our affection. The scholar sits down to write, and all his years of meditation do not furnish him with one good thought or happy expression ; but it is necessary to write a letter to a friend—and, forthwith, troops of gentle thoughts invest themselves, on every hand, with chosen words."

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

I AM startled that God can make me so rich even with my own cheap stores. It needs but a few wisps of straw in the sun, some small word dropped, or that has lain long silent in some book. When heaven begins and the dead arise no trumpet is blown. Perhaps the south wind will blow.

—THOREAU

FOREWORD

THE handsome welcome given to my little book, "Through Broadland in a Breydon Punt," has emboldened me to offer to the public an account of my latest trip, in a clumsy small sea-boat, on the pleasant waterways of Broadland.

Short notes were kept of each day's adventures, which were not of a very exciting character, but were, nevertheless, made enjoyable by the leisurely way in which the "Walrus" crept up- and down-stream, due largely to a lack of favourable winds, and frequently none at all. The temperature was rarely summer-like, and grey skies were so constant that the freshness of the atmosphere much atoned for a want of sunshine.

The conversion of the "Walrus" into a cabined boat was an experiment, inasmuch as the venture was an attempt to show how a small craft could be cheaply and easily transformed into a yacht, but the experiment was unsuccessful. It would have been much better had I placed myself in the hands of my

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friend Blake, of yachting renown, and had hired a ready-made article. However, I was owner and commander, and like "the wind which bloweth where it listeth," so did I.

ARTHUR H. PATTERSON
(*"John Knowlitt"*)

IBIS HOUSE

GREAT YARMOUTH

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INTRODUCTION

SOME little time ago when Mr. Arthur H. Patterson, self-styled "John Knowliddle" (but better known to his friends as "John No-a-lot") wrote his "Through Broadland in a Breydon Punt," the late Mr. Christopher Davies, who was practically the discoverer of the Norfolk Broads, wrote a very kindly and amusing preface to it.

Now that "John Knowliddle" is issuing the present work, I have great pleasure in following the lead of our common instructor and writing a few words of appreciation of it.

Mr. Patterson's work is always thorough and genuine, and reliable, and is the result of much keen observation savoured with much humour—a very rare and readable mixture.

He has taken up a line of his own, and his many readers enjoy him and his methods, for they feel he is saying just what he feels in his own devil-may-care way, which I share with him myself, and one which I think pays in the long run.

If he has a fault it is in his fatal failing for covering his envelopes with highly amusing sketches, a habit which interferes with the regular postal service, for they are so greatly enjoyed *in transitu*—sorters and postmen alike—that they are often “delayed in transmission.”

Seriously speaking, he is a power in Norfolk not only for the humorous side of his character but for the extreme correctness and reliability of his scientific observations, and I trust he may last long simultaneously instructing and amusing us, for his writings have driven as many into the pleasant paths of natural history as he has into the Board Schools !

WALTER RYE.

THE CRUISE OF THE "WALRUS"

CHAPTER I

THE PASSING OF THE "CROCUS"

So he ordered the carpenter of his ship . . . to build a little state-room, or cabin, in the middle of the long-boat . . . with a place to stand behind it to steer, and haul home the mainsheet . . . and work the sails . . . a table to eat on, with some lockers to put in some bottles . . . and particularly his rice, bread, and coffee.

—"ROBINSON CRUSOE."

ROBINSON CRUSOE is my patron saint. From childhood the book of his adventures has fascinated me, and fired my imagination. It is the best-thumbed book in my library to-day. In fancy I went to sea with Crusoe at Hull, and tramped the sandhills from Winterton to Yarmouth with the crew, after that terrible storm wherein his ship had foundered. We went together to the Brazils, thence designing "to stretch over for the African coast," but found ourselves cast ashore on the Caribbean island, the rest of the crew being drowned. I have been in the Moor's long-boat with Crusoe and Xury, the faithful; and again and often in the little periagua that he had hatchet-fashioned

out of a tree, in which short voyages were made round about the island.

No wonder, then, that the placid Broadland waters have a charm for me, and the wilder expanse of Breydon allures. I have wondered whether a boy chooses his "reading" by an instinct, or whether his mind becomes biased through a book by accident. Says Thoreau: "It is not all books that are as dull as their readers. . . . How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book. . . . A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art nearest to life itself." Crusoe, then, and Gilbert White, and "Thomas Edward" (the shoemaker naturalist of Banff), and Lubbock, of "Norfolk Fauna" fame, have influenced and moulded one boy's life; and Christopher Davies' "Swan and her Crew" confirmed it.

My designs have never been towards owning a *bona fide* yacht, but rather to small craft, that take up scant sea-room, with a minimum of raffle and trouble. The Moor's long-boat, with the shoulder-of-mutton sail, and the cabin amidships, was my ideal. . . .

"There's an old ketch's ship's-boat, as I think'll suit you, in the Custom's yard," said a man in a brass-buttoned uniform. "Go in the Long-room, and put in a price for her—she'll be going cheap." So, early in June (1922) I went and viewed her. She looked a "beauty without paint," a sorry craft clad in many coats of tar, with strakes gaping with rifts, but without a solitary broken timber, or rib.

I went as directed, and made the handsome offer of £2 for the boat, thinking it ridiculous to offer less; and on June 20th there came a note from His Majesty's Custom House ordering me to take her away at once at that price. Her parent ship, the coal-ketch "Crocus," had foundered somewhere off Haisboro', and the derelict boat, found wallowing at sea, was handed over to the Customs, the owners probably thinking her not worth the salvage money demanded. She was fourteen feet long, with a beam of five feet three inches, drawing (when picked up) possibly a couple of tons of salt water, through many a bad seam, and but a few inches when finally made ready for cabining in.

Then my logging began.

June 24th. Three of us—self, "Chicko" Drane, a trusty old waterman, and my son-in-law (a bit of a water spaniel himself) ran the old hull (her rifts having been roughly plugged with tow and putty) on rollers across the quay to the crane. "Chicko" hooked the slings to stem- and stern-post rings, and jumped aboard, being hoisted in her, and going over the quayside with her. On hitting the surface full fifty water-jets squirted upwards, and she quickly began to fill. Before we had gone a hundred yards towards the Haven bridge my pilot was astride the thwarts, baling her out with a bucket, to continue this hardly expected exercise until the punt "Yarwhelp" had towed her abreast of my Breydon shed, to fill on the slipway rollers, as she would, or leak it out again, as the tide fell, hoping she, like a sensible thing, would "take-up" and so staunch her sun-made and storm-strain wounds.

June 25th (Sunday). "Chicko" had offered to take the boat to my St. Olave's cutting by this morning's flood tide; so, having baled her out, at seven she was made fast to Drane's ancient shrimp-boat, scarce larger than her "tow"; and at half-past we had her afloat and heading for Breydon bridge, well knowing that, round the point, we should have a stormy reception from the fierce W.S.W. breeze a-blowing straight down-channel, dead ahead of us. The flood had already begun to run strongly, so that a seething array of white-topped waves came sweeping along at us, like a pack of foaming wolves.

"We'll ha' to tack the whole bloomin' way," said my firm-jawed boatman as he resolutely began manipulating the jib-sheet, now hitching it to a thole on the port side, and now on the starboard one, leaving the mainsheet fast, for the mainsail to fill itself at every tack, and look after itself, which it did bravely. Two tacks were made to reach every stake—some fifty-six on either side the channel, all told (when not scoured out, or ice-broken). Meantime, the old "Crocus" (the name still legible in yellow paint on the stern) was wallowing and slushing about, and constantly becoming less manageable and floatable as the water within her increased and logged her; and when passing stake 16, the double coir tow-rope parted with the chuck and the strain, when the twice-made derelict drove back homewards, as if she had had enough of it, forced by the wind against the romping tide.

Twice did we tack ere we could overtake the runaway, when I caught her by the gunwale with the boathook, and a stout hempen rope was made



Alfred

Crossing Breydon in a Storm
a lightening impression

THE STORM ON BREYDON

fast to her when I jumped in to bale her. Fortunately I was still aboard her; whether "Chicko's" boat would have missed stays, had I then been in the "Y.H. 210," and no frap happened, I am unable to say, but certain it is she did, heeling so badly that I saw her keel, as the lee-gunwale lapped up a cataract of water from a big roller. "Chicko" did not lose his head—he never does—and in an instant fell flat on his belly and reached out for the weather rail, hauling his weight up the almost perpendicular incline to it; and the boat, as if also knowing what she, too, should do, slowly—it seemed to me very slowly, indeed—paid off until the jib snapped and cracked as she ran into the wind, then filled, as my admiral seized the tiller, and the mainsail jibed smartly to its duties. Had I been sitting at the crucial moment upon the "lares" (mast foot-cleats), as I had been a few minutes before, I have little doubt that "Y.H. 210" would have Jonah'd me.

"Keep out of the men's boat!" said "Chicko," to the tumbling waters, with a chuckle of triumph—a saying, he tells me, that is a commonplace with fishermen who sail on rough seas.

For a second time, before Breydon was cleared, had I to haul the boat in and clamber aboard to lighten her of water, for the weight seriously told upon our speed; and yet a third time, when half-way up the Waveney to St. Olaves. My perch upon the "lares" was not a pleasant one, for the tow-boat shipped many a head of spray, which smothered my shoulders. The sky was exceeding wild with heavy grey clouds, that imparted to the waters the same dull drab tints. But for that busy

old patched jibsail we had not got over Breydon at all.

When nearing the Narrows, close to Burgh Castle, there was encountered a far less boisterous sea, for all the "Crocus's" labouring and lurching. The Walls slightly broke the force of the wind. Through these troubled waters sped a mother sheld-duck, with neck outstretched and gaping bill, chortling instructions to a striped downy family of four ducklings, whose speedful swimming was truly surprising, quite equalling their heavier parent's efforts. They were wholly incapable of flying, and she would not rise; instead, they paddled lustily, making the surface boil in a wake behind them with the vigorous strokes of their webbed feet. The old male flew in circles around them, much agitated, voicing instructions and warnings. Given freedom from molestation by heartless gunners, this remarkably handsome fowl would become a real and appropriate ornament to our waterways. This year they nested in peace—three or four pairs of them, on the uplands, not a great way from my houseboat at St. Olaves; and to my knowledge clutches of four, seven, and nine were hatched off. The youngsters are early led from their rabbit-burrow homes and escorted to water, and do not leave the waterside again. Even ducklings hatched in confinement have the same instinct for flitting at the earliest opportunity. They may be kept in captivity without trouble, and will become so tame as to feed from one's hand; and will patter their flat feet upon the soil, as plovers do, to frighten the worms to the surface. The sheld-duck, as a rule, is execrable upon the table, as are all carni-

vorous ducks. I tried one as an experiment, the verdict being, "never again!" From an economic standpoint the bird is worthless, but it is a beautiful creature, and anything that adds to a beautifying of this world can ill be spared. . . .

The big tide had swept the gulls off the flats to shelter and rest on the marshes: the terns were few, and kept to the neighbourhood of the ditches; as did the herons, who prefer hunting for voles upon the marshes on such days to trying pot-luck in angry waters.

The only yacht we passed (and none passed us) was lying at the mouth of the Norwich river, idling, the crew having had an uncomfortable night upon the mud, and were waiting for the ebb and smoother water to make it. We reached St. Olaves at 12.30, when Drane left me at the bridge, himself getting off back in a fifth of the time that covered the upbringing. The day continued squally, and when making for my cutting, with the "Crocus" half-full of water, a tremendous gust of wind pushed us into the reeds, and a heavy downpour of rain soaked me to the skin before I could round the corner. Then the sun broke out as if apologizing for his long absence, and very soon dried my togs; indeed, doing it thoroughly whilst I ate my dinner in the house-boat "Moorhen II." For some days the boat was allowed to fill and empty herself, as the tides rose and fell, and given opportunity to staunch her wounds.

July 8th. Hauled the boat upon the bank beside the cutting, scraped her inside and out, and tightened up the stem and stern with galvanized wire nails.

July 9th. Elijah Plane, a burly fellow, clad

against the incessant rain in his old khaki overcoat with its bullet punctures in the tails, and another fronting his heart, where a German bullet smashed his razor, and so (as he said) "seft his life!" In the midst of the deluge the boat was tilted on her side, with keel to wind'ard, so that the strakes could be tightened with copper nails and rubes—with another operator, under shelter, assisting; then the other side was brought under the hammer in like manner. On three such Sundays (the only day available for him) did this cheery fellow work in rain and wind.

I make no apology for acknowledging this Sunday labour; but for it the voyage had not been undertaken—in time. May I suggest that one's ends may not justify the means, although motives may excuse them? whilst judgments may not always spell justice.

A friend, in passing, remarked, "If that old boat sinks, I hope it will be on a Sunday!" Curiously enough he received the retort courteous when he, one Sunday soon after, was *obliged* to start his holiday tour behind a motor-boat *on the seventh day*!

We did not rename the boat the "Walrus" and launch her until early in August, and did not start on our voyage until the 9th. . . .

"Chicko" Drane and I, in an idling hour, exchanged reminiscences. Said he:

"Where are my medals? Bor, I'm sorry, but things was so bad I left 'em in Newcastle, but I pay the interest on 'em as it comes due.

"That lot" (showing me his photograph, dated 1907) "don't represent all my medals and clasps. I'd seft [saved] ninety lives from drowndin' when

I'd got that lot, and more came along when I'd totalled a hundred and seven lives. Adventures! well, I had a few, of course, and not always pleasant ones. My first 'save' was a bather on Yarmouth beach—I didn't get a thank for that. Then thirty-eight years ago I went to Newcastle (I'm 69 now), earnin' my livin' by eel-catchin' and shrimpin', as I'm now doin' here.

"My biggest haul in one day was nine water-police and one recruit. They'd been swamped. I rowed up, and soon had some in my boat, the rest hangin' by their hands to the gunwales. I got a new watch and chain by that little bit of good luck.

"I once dived eighty-five feet, with my clothes on, from the High Level Bridge, what I was happenin' to be walkin' on. Some boy had fallen in off the Fountain Steps.

"My worst experience? Well, that was jumpin' in after a boy what fell off a raft; we was fairly drawed under them twenty-odd-foot balks, bein' pretty nigh rasped to dade, and we both come up pretty nigh done for. I once brought three girls ashore what was on a plank, what broke in the middle, and let 'em in.

"Corpses! I never swum for a live person and brought him ashore a corpse; but many a one have I recovered in the ornery way—floatin', or by a drugge [drag].

"Oh, yes, people *will* cling, but I always dived and they always let go, and come to the top, givin' me a chance to catch hold of 'em to a little better advantage. A Scotchman, who was drowndin', turned on me and hit out, and scratched. I had

to make him drop it (!), and the minute he was quiet I seft him. One woman I brought out kept yellin' 'Let me die!' and as sune as I'd got her out in she jumped again, so I rescued her a second time, and held to her.

"An independent, wealthy gent walked over-board accidentally, and somehow managed to grip hold of some weedy piles. I went over after him and got him safe ashore. He was so grateful that he comes next day to mine, and says, '*I think I'm in your debt for savin' of me.*'"

"'Well, sir,' I says, 'I'm open to a little reward'; and it *was* a reward—a two-shillin' piece! I felt like chuckin' it at him, but I turned and showed him my back and walked away."

Here is a man in humble life, a real hero, making no noise, drawing no rewards: in all weathers toiling night and day, on the tides, with eel-pots and shrimp-trawl, for a bare living, and an uncertain one at that. Brave as a lion, he is as gentlemanly as a woman; his greatest grief that he cannot *yet* redeem the medals that record his bravery. Drane is an honest fellow, and looks it, with a voice as pleasing as his manners. . . .

I think that my run across Breydon through that fierce W.S.W. breeze was made the more enjoyable by knowing that so sturdy a swimmer, and so brave a man was my pilot, skipper, and chum on that memorable Sunday morning.

CHAPTER II

OUR SHIP LEAVES DOCK

At length, on Saturday, the last day of August, 1839, we two . . . weighed anchor at Concord . . . a port of entry and departure for the bodies, as well as the souls of men. . . . A warm rain had obscured the morning, and threatened to delay our voyage. . . . With a vigorous shove we launched our boat from the bank, while the flags and bulrushes curtesied a God-speed, and silently dropped down the stream.

—THOREAU.

OUR philosopher's boat, in which he made his eventful voyage, that had cost him a week's labour in the spring, was fifteen feet in length by three and a half in breadth. His propulsion depended upon two pairs of oars, poles for shoving in shallows, also two masts, one of which served for a tent-pole; he had a buffalo skin for a bed, and a cotton cloth for a roof; adding a pair of wheels when necessary for getting around portages. His lazarette contained certain food stores that seemed meet only for rabbits. He relied somewhat upon his fishing-rod, and, maybe, his traps, for he had already disposed of his gun. "Moreover," he says, "I have actually fished from the same kind of necessity that the first fishers did"; and whatever may have been his philosophy upon the shedding of blood, he goes on: "Once or twice . . . I found myself ranging the woods, like a half-starved hound with

a strange abandonment, seeking some kind of venison which I might devour." He confesses, too, that he slew squirrels, but abhorred their flesh. I see myself not far removed from him, in my preference for eels and tench, or a young wild rabbit; and what shall we say of a gentlewoman leaving her yacht in eager search for an innocent lamb's chops, or a tin of corned bovine, at the nearest Broadland emporium. Thoreau died in 1862, aged forty-five years, a warning to the would-be recluse and ascetic. A dreamy bachelor!

Taking warning by his mortifications, which this eccentric thinker appeared to glory in, and my own inconveniences of punt voyaging, I resolved on building a cabined boat, and fitting her with a sail that would spare me the physical exertions that made of pleasure a labour. I can recommend such a ship as my new venture proved to be, inconspicuous as she was, and is, from the standpoint of beauty. An impecunious young fellow, once owner, and all building debts paid, might in such a craft "do the Broads" year after year at a very small outlay upon its upkeep. An annual coat of paint, a half-sovereign for river dues, and, say, a sovereign for moorings in a private cutting, might well be covered with a year's tobacco money. Week-ends in summer and an annual holiday may be pleasantly spent thus upon rivers and broads. Hurry and scamper need not be indulged in, and in wet or blowy weather a young fellow is as well off afloat in his small cabin as at home, with a few favourite books and his spells of rest.

Unless a prospective *voyageur* intends to use his ship more than one season it would be better, I

think, and cheaper by far to "pal in" with a party of like spirits and hire a yacht, which should be roomy and captained by a regular yachtsman. The amateur who knows nothing of sailing should not fail to engage a friendly navigator to show him his hand. A friend of mine, profiting by my experiences in the "Yarwhelp," speculated in a shilling's worth of splines, and a cheap canvas awning, which he fitted to his sailing boat, and has since enjoyed delightful holidays on the Broads.

My son-in-law, who has his own small yacht, joined hands with me, and we twain put the cabin together, added rudder and mast and spars, and brought the "Walrus" into being. Much of the building material had been found floating on Breydon, from time to time, ownerless and unreclaimed—bits of deal, a length of waterlogged pitch-pine (out of which we made the coamings), and odd slabs of "launch-oak" (which were sawed up for bearers). These had been stored in the boat-shed for any useful purpose that might make demand upon them—some for years; and we drew upon them as we progressed. I kept all the sawyer's bills and the receipts for new stuff (for cabin roof, floorings, linings, and rafters); of the copper nails and rungs, the brass screws and galvanized *wire* nails, the porthole lights, and sundry, until they looked so formidable that, had I suspected the sum total of it, I might have been tempted to retain the "Yarwhelp" and its canopy. But I was out for copy, for new experiences, and a vaster comfort, not to mention a search for renewed health and vigour, a great desideratum. My beds and blankets on this voyage needed now no packing

up by day ; my cookery utensils and crockery had their proper lockers and places ; a rally round the cabin sides held many handy things ; and even the coamings (cabin sides) were sprinkled with favourite photographs and other trinkets.

There was some entertainment and pleasure in drawing plans, in designing curves and angles, and in watching sawn and planed bits of wood fall into place ; and at length to have before us a completed machine. He who once builds a boat often itches to build another. We obtained a little mast and a handy sail from Johnson, the yachting man at St. Olaves, who was not slow either to tender useful advice. Then there was the painting and the varnishing and the making of the rudder. Surely the little bits of tinkering and touching up upon a vessel vie in interest with the amateur motorman's dirty glory, a-fiddling on his back beneath the bowels of his car, the screwing and the titivating, the grease-rag flourishing, and the smelly smells. Are not these exercises part of the game ?

The would-be boat-builder may like to know how we progressed. In piecing the ship together, first, the floor bearers were laid and tacked in position, then the floors put down ; next the four short posts upon each gunwale, to carry the coamings and the arched roof bearers. The ends and settles were added, and the roof then nailed on. Strengthening pieces, a foot-rest, and a ring were added to the bulkhead near the bows to step the mast in. Cupboards were then erected at the cabin ends, and the canvas stretched upon the cabin top, and painted—and painted yet again : a coat being given the boards *beneath* the calico. I shall be pleased to

let any would-be builder examine my ship at any time.

Before the hull had been roofed in I had, of course, blow-lamped off the many skins of paint and tar upon the boat, and then painted her strakes above the water-line a leaden colour, and where the tar refused to give up every stain I treated such spots to a licking of notine, which made her take her adorning without more demur.

Then there came along the stores—the ropes and rond anchor, stakes, and crutches for the mast and spars; the awning to fling over the cockpit in the evening, and leaving it there when the morning rains were troublesome. On the low-built settles came the oat straw palliasses—*alias* cushions; the blankets, and the pillows, clad in amber repps; a kitbag of extra clothing, and a change of underwear; a "Primus" stove, a tin of paraffin and another of spirits; saucepans, kettle, frying-pan, plates, cups and saucers, jug, spoons, knives and prongs, tin-opener, pricker, towels, washbowl, soap, brushes (of sorts); tins of sugar, tea, milk, cocoa, coffee, salt, and pepper; jars of jam and butter; bottles of vinegar and pickles, and tins of meat and fruit. Added to these was a bottle of ammonia lotion to counteract the attentions of mosquitoes, or a possible attack of wasps; another of Friar's Balsam, and a bit of old clean linen. Pens, ink, and paper, even buttons and thread and needles, had their proper stations in the "rally"; and fishing-rod and tackle, a barometer, a little compass, a thermometer and a spring balance brought up the rear. Some favourite books, too, had their niche on top of a cupboard.

This inventory of groceries and crocks may cause a smile, but nevertheless such stores are absolutely necessary, for every *voyageur* who would be happily berthed aboard his ship must carry domesticity with him, with its comforts. An unmended patch, a lost brace button, a wasp sting in a prominent position, a scrubby chin are not desirable, and add no dignity to a yachtsman, nor to his comfort. The worries of thirty years ago, when bread and meat and vegetables needed searching for, exist no longer, for every village caters for holiday folk, and peripatetic shop folk go about in motor-cars, and even boats, as did the bum-boaters in the days of Nelson, when his fleets were lying at anchor in Yarmouth Roads.

And so, having shipped our supplies, we, on *Thursday, August 9th*, sailed out of Meen's Dyke at St. Olaves, at 4 p.m., several friends ashore wishing us *bon voyage*, and read the inscription in chalk upon the bows—the "Walrus," our name-plates having not yet arrived. Our boom swept aside the reeds on our port side, bending them low, to spring erect again as we left them behind us. The marsh-farmer had cut down the huge reed-bed, leaving only that narrow fringe bordering it, quite the usual thing to do beside rivers affected by tides, as these fringes act as a fencing, to keep high tides, accompanied by strong winds, from washing swaths and heaps of the reeds into the tideway, to be a nuisance to boating and a loss to the owner. The reeds have to lie several days during big tides in order to get a chance to dry: to stack them wet would court disaster.

It was interesting to watch the martins and

swallows flying low over the stubbles standing in the water, snapping up hundreds of minute beetles, flies, spiders, and various other insects that had crawled to the topmost inches, and hung there; and deftly picking up others that feebly swam in the deeper places. As the waters subsided starlings and wagtails joined in the quest, which pied wagtails have been numerous this season, thanks to the fewer cuckoos to usurp their nests

The "Walrus," as we had fondly hoped, behaved remarkably well; was stiffer than we suspected her; her broad beam, her low cabin, and wide stern, helped by a half cwt. of ballast, warranting a steadiness of character that was commendable. On a lazy ebb tide, with a scanty wind, she seemed to exhibit a desire to look behind her; and the dinghy showed an inclination to act a bit contrary, both making efforts to run in double harness, rather than in tandem. A horsey yachtsman will well understand this simile! This behaviour did not meet with the skipper's approbation, especially when a craft with a higher peak and a vaster spread of sail, moved by in a more sailor-like fashion. Hence the oars were out-thrust and indifferent comportment rebuked. The idleness and lassitude, not to say contrariness, of the winds was a distinguishing feature—if not of August generally, at least of the usual samples vouchsafed to the skipper and crew of the "Walrus" during the greater part of our voyage.

On a frisky gale our ship resented constraint, and would negotiate an ebb or a flood tide with saucy eagerness, making her cutwater throw aside the waters in foamy swaths, to bubble in a twister

ing wake behind her, when she would turn almost in her own length, and get back again to her work with another sharp turn of the tiller. She was built for the sea, and sluggish inland waters she certainly resented. We never made the tiller fast, and only once did she so far forget herself as to ship water over the gunwale.

Without incident we reached Breydon, on an even keel: we had been watching her rather than the birds, bringing in a verdict of "Not guilty, my lord!" as we ran the "Walrus's" nose into the mud befronting my Breydon boat-shed, there to ride at anchor until the morrow's early flood. I spent my first night aboard her here, and munched my supper to the music of the gulls.

As I sat in the cockpit, peering under the awning in the gloaming, I thought of many old habitues of the gaunt old boat-sheds, and of the yachting folk of a long past generation, who once crowded the dozen stagings, now but a huddle of rotting posts, upon which grow waving seaweeds. Thereat used to lie Mack's old "Gem," David Garrod's "Mayflower," Suffling's "Falcon," the "Vivid," the "Oasis," the "Maud," the "Ada," and the "Ethel," then a proud array of locally owned vessels that made the town end of Breydon gay with sails and bunting; when Fred Baldry, "Lucky" Bob Edmonds, and others were noted helmsmen. I recalled to mind the puntsmen—Harry Bond, Palmer, Jimmy Hurr, "Admiral" Gooch, "Strike" Sharman, and many another, unknown to-day save in the drifting traditions of their own descendants. The Breydon bridge killed yachting; the growing flats, and closer drainage of the marshland levels

exterminated fowl and fowlers. The altered conditions of Breydon, and the lower reaches of the rivers also wiped out smelter and eelman, mulleter and fisherman; as Time and Change—twin destroyers—removed an old, old man whom I knew, who took his silent way to the waterside, with trembling limbs and aged thoughts; but poor old Piscator disappeared, all but unnoticed in his dropping out, and nobody else remembers him now. "And Enoch walked with God [and nature] and he was not; for God took him." How can a fellow like myself, whose pleasures of my early youth have become the inheritance of other men, forget those vanished and romantic days? The very haunts of these men have passed away, and *who* will, a decade or so hence, remember Burgh Water Frolic, or the "Berney Arms" one-barrel pub, the old "Lord Nelson," and the "Staff of Life," whereat these men made merry, and spun yarns that were spiced with folk- and nature-lore, with stirring reminiscences, and pungent linguistics? Ragged old Charon, in his mildewed scallop, has ferried them every one across the Styx. . . .

At eleven next morning, on the early flood, the "Walrus," with the dinghy and the old punt "Yarwhelp" towing behind her, was drifted under the bridges, past the shrimp-boats, the punts, and yachts that lay moored beside the muds and gnarly timbered quays.

CHAPTER III

AND NOW FOR RANWORTH

The Call of the Wild . . . sends men to the mountains, to the forests and streams, to all the innumerable places where one must fight to live. . . . We ought, if possible, to pass one month of each year at the Auberge de la Belle Etoile, sleeping on Mother Earth, cooking food we have caught or killed, braving heat and cold, rain and sun, absorbing at every pool the virtue of the wilderness.

—H. A. VACHELL ("Daily Mail").

SURELY I am not alone in my astonishment at the ease with which those who drift and sail around Broadland forget the days and dates, as well as the swift flight of the passing time. One day has already been counted in, in crossing Breydon, an eight-mile run, and another have we spent in reaching Stokesby, a like distance, putting in the night there. We had hoisted sail on the flood tide, after certain delays, and had only reached Runham for the noontide meal.

We had been much entertained by the ways of passing amateur yachts-folk, who have dressed themselves so gaily for the part, who know so little of boating that they resent a friendly hint, apparently preferring to learn wit by untoward experience. There were three young fellows, whom we later met in a Yareside cutting, who were in distress soon after starting from Thorpe; unlucky seamanship had unnerved them "beyond repair." So they

snugged down, using their vessel as a lodging-house, and made short holiday excursions by train. Wise young men, perhaps!

As we started this morning we noticed another amateur struggling fiercely with an only oar against a concrete breakwater, whereon his sail, bellied with the east wind, pushed his ship again and again. He took our tip, lowered his sail, and accepted a towing off. A little ahead five dandies, elaborately got up, had got aground in the wind's eye, and were properly stuck. Our tip was resented keenly. So I delayed a moment and sketched this pentagonal concourse of brilliant seamen, as they sweated, thanking them for their "sitting." A hundred yards farther on they were acrobating again, so we went by in silence they must have felt!

No young fellow "doing the Broads" should step aboard a yacht without having first read up a little from the guide-books, and also on the rudiments of sailing etiquette and science.

Meantime, we were steadily progressing, the skipper at the tiller, the scribbler at his book. My thoughts and memory wandered over those grassy levels through which the river sinuously meandered, where so many daybreaks and sunsets found me, in days of yore, gun in hand, a-loafing. Those marshes in spring echoed the petulant cries of the nesting redshanks; on frosty days they abounded with lapwings and often golden plover; on autumn evenings ducks came from sea to the shell-sprinkled ditches. When flooded by excessive rains in the shorter days, or through a bank break, which formed vast spreading lagoons, they often swarmed with mallard and with pochard. Where yon

unsavoury horse shambles are situated was then a shooters' corner, where walking gunners forgathered in sniping days and blizzards. For many years stood there the "Black Boards," where they sheltered and gossiped during the storms. "Billy" Sampson, a noted lame fowler, passed midnights here, and slew fowl by "ear" as they passed overhead; and his cunning retriever silently collected fowl that fell to other guns as well. How could they identify their own victims even if suspicion was aroused?

On those Mautby marshes hares abounded, and poachers nightly wandered; among them "Trotter" Lodge was the doyen. He was also quarrelsome, and loved a rough and tumble with the men of velveteen, and "gentlemen in blue." Yarmouth jail was familiar to him. "Cadger" Brown ostensibly collected watercress and mushrooms; under these "floral tributes" frequently lay poached hares, inside the basket, and occasionally tame conies. "Scarbro" Jack (one of my heroes) was clever at the game too, but cautious and conciliatory; and prettily could he spin a yarn to an appreciative listener. George Blake, a noble man to look at, was an ardent student of *Lepusian* zoology; and what he did not know of hares, of the ways and doings of wild rabbits, as well as mallard and wigeon, they scarce knew themselves.

In workless days and idle hours these shrewd wild fellows made good apology for a livelihood; and many unsuspecting (?) townsfolk, and those who were not bold enough to poach themselves, through these committed it by proxy. On those lowlands hare coursing in the 'seventies was a

popular sport, which allured all the "sporting coves" from Yarmouth, with their greyhounds and their lurchers. Vehicles brought the swell mob, the vulgar horde coming afoot. But poor Puss has since become "vermin," and fallen on yet more evil days.

And so, still thinking, and sighing over the good old days, we reached Runham Staithe, whereat we stayed to dine, my skipper dropping the tiller for the fry-pan handle, with both of which he maketh a pleasant tune. The breeze meantime fell away, and the surface of the lifting river became as glass, in which the drowsy reeds reversed themselves, and the struggling insects upon the surface courted our attention, but they were too many to rescue; so we pitied the short-lived things, and left them to the birds and fishes, that they in turn might live! How rife and reckless is Nature with Life, when millions are formed only to be devoured and annihilated by others—copepods gobbled up by crustaceans, crustaceans devoured by fishes, and these in turn by seals and porpoises, which the polar bears prey upon; bears killed by man, and man slaughtering his fellow, and Death conquering all that lives! . . .

The Stokesby kiddies, espying us, lifted their heads from waterside playing, and began their monotonous, dull chanting, "Old John Barley-corn!" The village schoolmaster found us out, and kindly pressed a bag of Stokesby onions on us, which he had collected for us, and which we had shortly to relegate to the dinghy's aloof keeping. I asked him to give me the words of that confused jingle; his rendering was thusly:

Old John Barleycorn
He's the prettiest man of all,
He can hop, and he can skip,
He can play the fiddlestick—

a sublime, insane sample of riverside rhyming ! I noticed that the urchins, instead of quarrelling sensibly among themselves, played listlessly, and bagpiped this atrocity in verse without fervour, although a little more lustily as a likely yacht loomed up. An old native lady assured us that they had sung it "to her knollidge fifty yeer an' more," and that "the werry babes droned it in their cradles"; and, as if in substantiation of her assertions, a mother wheeled a perambulator past that held a couple of mités, the smaller one actually in baby language struggling with the refrain !

At Stokesby there are awkward bends in the river, shaped like a double-ended meat-hook ; and what you gain on one rounding, you lose by being wind-pushed into the next, where the reeds jut out aggressively into the river. At the speed we started for Acle we dared not prophesy our arrival. I wondered if they were to mow these bristling reeds, as they have done the hedgerows—not that hedge-trimming has lessened road dangers, but rather increased them—would it be easier and safer to negotiate the corners ? Then the drifting marsh hay further hampered us, even impeding the rudder by fouling the pintles and the gudgeons.

Birds were remarkable for their absence : a gull passing high overhead, a heron a little lower, crossing the marshes, and now and then an unseen moorhen croaking in the sedges, and that was all. Once in a while we felt a cat's-paw of wind, when

the faint V-shaped wake behind us made a crystal bubble or two. A little beyond John Barleycorn's village we ran into a flock of swallows that were vigorously plunging upon the surface of the river, so strong their impact that the splashes hid them for an instant, the spray rising, as at the plunges of terns. Their booty was a miserable drift of insects that had been blown or borne into the water by atmospheric conditions, or maybe had been washed off the reeds by a passing motor-boat. I leant over the gunwale, dipping my hand under some of them, and bottled them in spirits, a few of which I sent to Mr. Thouless, an entomologist of repute, who sorted them over. They comprised, he assured me, a yellow-bodied sawfly, and several *Staphylina oxytelus*, weevils (*Sitones*), several ichneumons, and various flies. A number of red-elytraed Staphylinids (*S. erythropterus*), struggling as we passed them, eluded my grip, but the swallows deftly nabbed them; and I wished heartily they would come and save me from the "thunder-flies" that lit upon my face.

Then the wind had pity on us and bustled us, giving us an excellent slant of it, that soon landed us at Acle.

Oak-ley of the ancients, Ake-ley of the rurals, and Ack-il of the stranger folk, a not unpleasant village, with a pretty church, a busy street, and a dangerous motoring corner, not unlike a bent bottle-neck, which the baker on the spot assured me was the safest spot in Norfolk! I asked him why. He emphatically answered that the maddest of motor-men, who knew it as a danger spot, most carefully negotiated it! Something in that! I observed no

unemployed loafing in quiet Acle, and a native young lady insisted that it was "God's own village!" May it remain in His keeping.

From the river Acle has a peculiarly trim and Dutchlike outlook—all but around the yacht-folk's mooring place, with its grimly wicked footpath. It is said that an old lady, observing a gentleman on a certain road studying a guide-book, asked him:

"What be yow a-lookin' for, sir?"

"I am an Amurican," said he, "and I am seeking a certain Roman road!"

"Why, bor," she answered, "you're on it!"

"*This!*" he snorted. "Strenger, I guess not!"

"Wal, sir," she insisted, "it *wor* made in them Roaming days, but it ain't bin mended since!"

It must have been Acle Staithe!

I made a few notes, as follow: patient anglers plumbing the river's depths, a-legering, not much doing—sauntered to the village, shopping—skipper hobnobbing with other skippers, as skippers do—at noon, daughter Nellie arrived with various goodly home-cooked viands, and we had a tablecloth on to give a touch of homeliness to the repast. I bolted home in the evening for my binoculars, that had been left behind—returned in the morning and had a gossip with various week-enders who sojourn here weekly for quietude—loafed around Eastick's boat station. Mem.—I have noticed that in almost every boat station one aged boat at least lies somewhere around: spared from sentiment, perhaps, or old-time memories. Here, in a grassy corner lay a long, narrow hull a-rotting, that had once on a time been engined; the timbers were distorted, strakes decaying, and wisps of sturdy reeds were

growing between its ribs. The aged hulk is picturesque if not attractive in its perishing. Later, at Southgate's, I saw an early-designed old yacht tumbling at its leisure to pieces in a dilapidated boat-shed. It is the same elsewhere, notably at Oulton, where, in particular, an ancient hulk of a house-boat leans helplessly against a wall at the rear of the "Commodore," whose complexity of designs cover several periods of architecture, probably Egyptian, Ionian, Early English, and Futurist! It still grows uglier in its retirement and decay. Yet, as a rule, these huddles of pensioned craft are traps with which to catch an artist's eye.

And now for Ranworth! The skipper cast adrift, and the crew tied in leash the dinghy and the "Yarwhelp," to throw the latter off for good and all when we shall have staked in Ranworth Dyke.

We enjoyed a bit of free sailing soon after we had cleared Fishley Mill, and the "Yarwhelp" put on a show of restiveness, bumping her sharp iron-clad prow into the stern of the "Walrus"—her successor: so much so that I had to cover her nose with an old velour hat, and lash it on. The outlook was fairly lively with moving craft, some crowded with feminine beauty clad in rainbow tints, who lolled idly and coquetted gaily with their friends of the opposite gender. Old folk envy them their youth and gallantry, and chip up blithely when they recall an almost forgotten fact that they too were once as youthful and as merry and gay!

My sober skipper had little eye for these, and so solely devoted his attention to the "Walrus's" paces; and as carefully negotiated these passing

argosies as any old smackmaster who races through the roadstead at sea on a following wind with tact and adroitness amongst a fleet of tacking schooners and coasters. And like these old coasters left behind, so, too, our moving argosies passed beyond and were lost in the distance. Many of these August *voyageurs* were hastening to the coming regattas on the Waveney.

I was tickled by the folks whom we had passed, at the various expressions upon their faces. Some looked astonished at the "Walrus," and nodded comment to each other; some laughed and giggled, not at us, but over private fancies; others were on their dignity, and yet others were ultra-dignified—almost painfully so. I observed one or two who knew a little about yachts and motors, and many that knew more; the former took greater pains to impress onlookers. But every one apparently aimed at looking impressive; the old male hand in his stylish navy-blue coat and regulation white cap, the "lady of the barge," when elderly too, looking egregiously emphatic and imposing. There were fussy folk in keeping with their snorting motors; there were placid, sweet people, crowded in squat motor-boats, with impish, hornless little gramophones rattling out gay tunes, like "Destiny" and "Home, Sweet Home." These boxes of potted music are fast ousting the once popular though usually weary pianos that used to be guilty of shaking out rather flat waltzes as one sailed by, or the fractious wind drifted the lazy tunes usward in its playful moods. . . . I do not know what to say of these Sunday usages; but yacht-folks afloat are at least out of the way of

those who hold austere strong opinions upon Sunday pleasuring. Let every man who has one consult his own conscience, and he who would condemn another take heed of his own shortcomings.

We staked down at four o'clock at the entrance to Ranworth Broad; and having, in due course, washed our platters and our hands, we sat a while in the cockpit enjoying the restfulness of this little corner of Eden. An old gentleman, a native in his Sunday broadcloth, with his comfortable spouse, and another lady, came slowly towards the river, he sculling leisurely, they sitting demurely on the after thwart, their feet ensconced in the sweet marsh hay that littered the flat slow-paced hay boat. He had rowed to church, and was rowing home again. We exchanged greetings, when the old fellow patronizingly remarked, "Wal, bor, yar coat tell me where yow ha' bin tu!"

"But it did not," I thought, for my comfortable light khaki coat had not known me as an old soldier—of the sort he meant.

My skipper, having squared up, rowed off to the "Malsters' Arms" in the dinghy, towing the old "Yarwhelp" to her new owner's domains. . . .

In the peacefulness of the evening we upstaked again, and cast off, to quietly drift downstream, to lie almost under the shadow of St. Benet's Abbey in a sequestered corner, where the tall reeds folded us in their bosom; and so we settled for the night, and so to roost.

CHAPTER IV

IN PUMP-MILL COUNTRY

Between Womack Dyke and Potter Heigham are two or three fine old windmills, good specimens of the picturesque structures whose work, it is to be feared, will, at no very distant date, be done by ugly brick or corrugated iron housed steam pumps. . . . The interior is often an eerie place. . . . Even on calm nights strange noises are heard—faint sighings, creakings, and groanings.

—W. A. DUTT ("Norfolk Broads").

ON Monday, August 13th, we were astir at 6 a.m. when, having drawn in our eel-lines, without a bait missing, we had an early snap, and were under weigh at seven, to begin a leisurely drift downstream to Thurne Mouth, passing but one or two idling yachts, from whence came a semi-nude figure for his morning dip, or the aroma of appetizing viands, or the laughter of gay souls that were taking no thought for the morrow. Where else, but in Broadland silences, can rest-seeking mortals arrive at such a condition of mind as to loathe the morning newspaper, and crave no more, nor dread the postman's knock, nor the din of crowded streets; in Broadland man "wants little here below," but wants that little long!

We pulled up in sight of St. Benet's Abbey; the old place hath a charm for me, a fascination which I cannot explain. Built by wise artificers, probably monks themselves, on a peculiarly suitable

and stable basis, in the midst of marshy and boggy land, and enough still left of its ruins for one's imagination to run riot over, I can sit hard by it, in all weathers, under all conditions of light and shade, and in the darkness, and paint endless mental pictures of a remote and romantic past, and hold converse with "the spirits of just men [I hope] made perfect," if I may quote from Hebrews xii. I wonder if the utilitarian who stuck that (presumably, flour-mill) tower in the midst of the ruins possessed a poetic soul, or was he a gross, unpardonable cynic? My prosy skipper thought he was a smart fellow, but could not explain why. It seemed to me to be even a greater sacrilege than that, that a dozen huge black swine should be grubbing around, rooting with their ill-favoured snouts in soil wherein lie buried bones of devout men.

There flew overhead, or scuttled by, the usual commonplace fowls: a heron or two dotting the sky abovehead; a score or more starlings, off on some important business, possibly beetle catching on some freshly shorn reed-bed; a moorhen skulking, with rancorous cry, through a reedy corner. These had engagements of their own, without turning a questioning eye upon the drifting ship. . . .

When near Thurne Mouth we grazed the bank, and the drowsy atmosphere tempted us to throw out the rond anchor. The cook also had suggested a breakfast of bacon and eggs, those great "stand-bys" of all campers, afloat or ashore, which shortly gave forth an aroma that was irresistible. I had been pottering around among the luxuriant prickly thistles, on the cracked dry river dredgings upon

the marsh edge, where fluttered tortoise shells in erratic dancings over the purple thistle-heads, and a whole menagerie of insects—grotesque ichneumon flies, hovering *Syrphidæ*—mimic wasps to look at, and white-rumped wild bees, that sucked savagely at sweets that tickled their senses, or chased away honey bees that would have shared them. Dead swan-mussels dotted the barer soil with bluey shells, and the brittle shell of the viviparous water snail was abundant. But one heap of river dredgings is much like another; and in due time the marsh flowers cover them with beauty to match the surroundings.

Here as elsewhere the tormenting "thunder-flies" were a nuisance; an odd one or a couple sat squat upon the cabin top, meditating annoyance, and buzzed around one's head whenever it suited them, in spite of protests. Wasps in squads are not so irritating. Even saints rebel against them, and Luther slaughtered flies without mercy, calling them the "emissaries of Diabolus, and the ghosts of heretics," because they would inspect the pages of the book he read. The monks swore they were immoral; and the pious Mussulman will shorten his prayers to swat them with his slipper—"in the name of the Prophet." One persevering fly comes back to mind: he boarded us at Stokesby, a sort of stowaway, and squatted just out of reach on the cabin top, twice having a waltz around my head, and finally left us at Acle. Perspiring skippers at helm curse them deeply! . . .

We turned into Thurne river in a lively atmosphere, but the wind was contrary; we made a continuous tack of it, but when it strengthened the

"Walrus" woke up, and even suggested to us that she did not intend that a large yacht behind should pass us. For two miles that little rag of ours out-distanced the larger spread of snowy canvas astern. But bit by bit the topsail and huge jibsail grew bigger, and at length went by, but on her next short board she missed stays, and rammed her nose in the bank. Her skipper said nothing, that our sparrow should still out-distance his white winged water-fowl. My own skipper let her have it!

We ran into an inviting gap against a marshman's staithe, and landed in search of provender and milk, both of which were just then in plenty in the marsh-farm cottage. I was shown a seat, and the lady, I presently found, had often seen me in Yarmouth.

"You have here someone who knows salt water!" I remarked, on noticing a little glass case of corals, and some grotesque shells; whilst upon the wall hung a coloured drawing of a windjammer, not to mention other treasures that conjured up visions of dark-skinned men and maidens, nodding palms, and dazzling white sea-beaches, and the music of the surf.

My reverie was rudely broken by another box of potted music on the river, but it quickly passed out of hearing; and a yet harsher sound, though more appropriate, came from the old mill's interior, whose travailing machinery bemoaned the need of lubricants, as parakeets clamour when hungry. The visitor to the Broadlands need scarce telling that the windmills dotting the low landscape for many a mile around do not grind corn, but are harnessed instead to pumps or wheels that lift the surplus

water from the marsh ditches over the banks or through the sluices, into the rivers, whose tides are often higher than the marsh levels.

There is a singularly Dutch-like appearance in this country, although the mill-towers here are more symmetrical than, if not so grotesque as, their prototypes in Holland. To-day the steam engine helps in excessive rain floods, although normally the cheaper wind-power is still able to cope with the necessary drainage. Since my friend Dutt wrote (in 1903) new towers even have reared their caps and sails.

I love these old water-mills, and have enjoyed many golden sunsets and spent many moonless and moonlit nights beside them, moored in the sedge or reed-lined "mill-deek," watching the tenant swallows taking their eventide flights around them—the youngsters drilling with their seniors, and sharing their gnats and midges; whilst the starlings mounted the sail-slats to chat, and take a last look round the country before settling in some reed-clump for the night.

Hundreds of baby swallows are born in their feather-lined mud beds stuck on spikes, and in decayed brick corners, in the mill-towers; but all do not emerge into the sunshine and the joy of life, for fluttering chicks in their practice flights sometimes alight on greasy cog-wheel, and become hopelessly besmeared, to fall and die among the dust. Some small mites have a joy-ride around in the nest affixed to the central revolving shaft, when the vane sees that the mill sails must needs go to windward to meet it. The small birds' ordure, like a chalk ring, encircles the floor by the shaft-hole, to

chronicle the demise of a million insect pests. Next spring a thousand swallows from overseas spy a hundred, much-alike mill-towers, and, without hesitation, break their flock and haste to their last year's lodgings. . . .

We had a good stare at "Potter," the pleasant, as we threaded our way among passing craft, with the ease of a blue-black *Gyrinus natator* beetle that zigzags its way through the mazy water dance of its kindred beetles, on the still waters of a marsh ditch. We hailed, or were hailed by, old acquaintances; new ones ogled us enquiringly. On the star-board side we passed moored yachts manned by gay crews, every member of which looked as if town life and its worries had let go the leash that had held them in bondage, and glad that the rumble of railroad wheels upon the train-bridge had not been increased by *their* weights above them. Still more restful, because more apparently permanent, the gay bungalows on our port side, that arose from amidst beds of still gayer flowers, owned *dolce far niente* tenants (if I may so mutilate my Latinics), who lolled and smiled contentment. The two sides of the river bespeak the nomadic and the residential characteristics. If you cannot reside in "Potter" gay, then sojourn there; if your finances fail you, court an invitation!

Having a flat marshland behind it all, the feeling of Wroxham's stiffness and oppressiveness, its shut-in-ness among overbearing trees, is entirely absent at Potter. Give me Potter for hot, overpowering summer days; and Wroxham when chilly sea-winds push landwards the sea-fogs bred of broiling days. . . .

"Hold the tiller; see to the boom there; we are going to shoot the bridge!" commanded Captain Kettle, and I had to leave my cogitations and smartly jump to it. We had kept enough way on us so that as we approached the bridge the mast was snatched out of its cleats and lowered, and the "Walrus" pushed her iron-clad nose under the arch, when, with a little help by hand, and later with the oars astern, she took us neatly to the grassy bank, and patiently submitted to restraint. As I roped her to a stake there came to mind a long past day when Kirby, the angler, put the "Idler," the old small house-boat, in a first cutting near the bridge, the pioneer of a new era in waterside delights, since then the little sentry-box, so to speak, has been replaced by a mile and more of barracks. . . .

We wanted to get to Kendal Dyke for the night, so started betimes to do a run that under favourable circumstances should have taken an hour. But the wind, as usual, showed obstinate, and when it might have done us a goodly turn it eased. I thought of another prophet, who went down to Joppa, and booked a passage for Tarshish. The skipper reluctantly went ashore on the rond and tugged at a tow-rope, shortly to commence grumbling about a shoeful of water that he had shipped, and then another; so, on the old score of comparisons between a lamb and a sheep, strained again at the tow-rope. In due time we reached the Dyke entrance with our reluctant vessel, when my captain stepped aboard and took command, to earn the philosopher's good opinion, who wrote: "He is the best sailor who can steer within the fewest points

of the wind, and extract power out of the greatest obstacles." The "Walrus" crawled, but kept on. An aristocratic boatman, with his sail hung topsyturvy, with leeches all ways wrong, crept behind, anxiously enquiring if his boat (smaller than ours) could negotiate the Hickling weeds. I told him I didn't know, but "try it," and that ours had got to do it, however much she might demur. The gent turned tail: a good gust of wind would have made him turn turtle.

At 8.30 we dropped sail beside Robert Vincent's eel-hut, finding the old Sport looking a-weary. He was then wanting a nap, as last night's vigil had robbed him of sleep, through some luckless wight running amok with a yacht among his nets and buoys. We shook; and I and my man turned out of the grey night into warm blankets on the oat-straw cushions on the low settles, and were soon in the Land of Nod, to jump up refreshed at 5.30 on the morrow to see Vincent haul his eel-set pods, and give the bewildered eels therein a second shock as they walloped out of the pods into the narrow-mouthed tub, to solve the riddle of perpetual motion, with squashy sounds of slapping tails and gurgling gullets. Those stones of eels had a lively ringmaster in one that scaled five pounds, whose every squirm set them mazily gyrating round the barrel. Among the crowd had come up a splendid tench and a robust perch, which twain were emptied into a half-submerged trunk, to join others captured during the week. It is a matter for astonishment that so few scaly-sided fishes enter the eel-sets.

Robert and I talked eel-shop, as usual, and then

he asked how many I could do with. I said three pounds. So, one by one, he finger-locked an eel, and threw it smartly on a board, paralysing it; and I helped him. Of these a saucepanful were skinned, and, accompanied with onions and potatoes, were soon bubbling around as stew. Bob did not seem to observe hordes of eel-fry, little larger than in their larval state moving upstream in spring; as I had seen them in the shallow-edged Ribble. These tiny transparent thread-needle-sized things pass unnoticed in our dark waters and shady, deep margins. When in Lancashire I watched mill operatives with sticks and muslin nets scoop out their thousands, filling buckets that they took for them, and sold them for snig-pudding making. Nor did Vincent argue the point that over-year eels in thousands came upstream in April: I had caught many in my punt at the harbour mouth, on dark nights, in my youth. Where my old friend, T. Southwell, stoutly denied my theory, my Broadland friend did not commit himself.

We had two or three fries and stews in all, and dropped the last few overboard, but not from want of appetite (!).

The morning's sunrise had been charming and the following breeze that came after breakfast was a godsend. At 8.30 we were spinning along, the "Walrus" behaving right handsomely, to be checked when wayward, or bringing the top-strake a little too horizontally. We called on Miss E. L. Turner for a chat on our favourite marshland birds, upon which with pen and camera she is so great an authority, and knows so many of their secrets and their household ways. If you have heard two

old field naturalists a-gossiping, know ye that an outside observer gets in but few words even edge-ways. . . .

And now, you baggage—to the "Walrus"—show your paces; and she did. We caracoled around the big hay boats, on which stood movable statuesque marshmen, weed-drawing, with long shafted "dydles." Hickling weeds were being attacked at last! This crop of catstail and "water moss" gave forth a smell inexpressible as it came to the surface, to be sold by the ton for manure. The vegetation of Broadland is extremely rank-growing, both above and below water: every year's fall of reed and sedge adds layer to layer. A continued lack of suppression in some has made them swamps, and eventually, by a system of drainage, into rich marsh and fertile corn-lands.

We put the "Walrus's" nose into some yet unshorn water gardens, and her shallow draught allowed her to rollick through them, to the great envy of three muscle-weary young yachtsmen on the "Water Rat" whose quants met no resistance, and consequently did no service, nor was our wind theirs. They looked as sadly as the crew of Vanderdecken, on the "Flying Dutchman," that never more returned to port. It seemed a pity that so fine a stretch of water should be so unnavigable. I asked a local owner why this abomination; he suggestively replied that "they preferred to be quiet," which covered and qualified the selfishness of riparian owners generally.

"Let her have it, skipper!"

And the good ship had it: she wallowed, she rollicked, she churned up behind her a wake of

eddying bubbles. She doubled this way and that, like a hound with a hare before it. She had already let in water through the upper dry strakes, but a bucket or so more did not matter. Never since her sea-going days, until the day she wallowed over Breydon, and to-day at Hickling, had she enjoyed so lively and roistering a spin.

We gave our ship a rest at the "Pleasure Boat" Staithe at Hickling, and went ashore to go a-shopping, when, lo! a travelling shop on a motor-van stopped to let us see the groceries inside. So we bought bread and various good things, including butter, which was a rather doubtful bit of grease. Even Solomon's historic pot of ointment had a fly in it. Ours had a mixed look about it, like the flavour that followed it to our bread. Perhaps our palates had been coddled, but even the skipper's proved rebellious. Maybe, the eels, like Pharaoh's vulgar fleshpots had corrupted the grumbling gipsying sons of Israel.

I wandered to Vincent's cottage, meeting there Mrs. Grosvenor, the medal holding champion lady shot. We were old friends, and the shooting range being vacant, I went where many crack shots had often before assembled—to be beaten. She challenged me; and so, after twenty-seven years a total abstainer from powder and shot, I pointed at pigeons made of clay! My first pull was a fluke, for a safety-catch gun I had never handled before, and the pigeon was well on the way for Potter Heigham before I pulled, and missed. Mrs. Grosvenor winged it; so she did number two, which I fairly missed. Number three I shot to fragments, and might have got my hand in again,

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but, like a courteous competitor, I asked not to be tempted to spoil her reputation as an expert shooter.

At 2.10 p.m. we got under weigh again, and bowled away for Martham



THE END OF POOR "PUSS"

CHAPTER V

THE HICKLING BITTERNS

The coot was swimming in the reedy pool, Beside the waterhen so soon affrighted ; And in the weedy moat the heron, fond of solitude, alighted. The moping heron, motionless and stiff, that on a stone, As silently and stilly, stood, An apparent sentinel, as if to guard the water-lily.

—TOM HOOD.

THE month of August is the yachtsman's holiday season, when white wings gliding gracefully between long miles of rush margined marsh banks, intensify the vivid greenery of Broadland summer time. In the distance, where the serpentine rivers wind unseen below the level of the reeds and rushes, moving craft appear as if gliding through or across the marshlands. In blithe May the sere and brittle reeds left from last year's crop rise leafless, in vast drab masses ; and these, with the spikes and spears of a newer growth, harbour chattering sedge- and reed-warblers, and divers other *Sylvidæ*. Bearded tits clamber up the reedmace, chipping at the over-ripe "pokers," that are puffed by withering Time, and scattering the seeds like cotton-wool to the playful breezes. White-pated coots, obsessed by the pairing instinct, and the jealousy of rivals, flutter across still waters that break into lines of dancing foam, as their dusky, semi-palmated toes trail and paddle upon the surface.

Moorhens croak harshly in impenetrable reed-beds; slim brown rails answer them back, and great-crested grebes dive spiritedly among the shoals of small fishes, scaring them into precipitate bolting, to hide beneath the water weeds, soon to bob up again, with mandibles gaping widely, with struggling fishes held securely between them, where you least expected them to reappear.

In lone corners and in secluded bights, standing thigh deep in the shallows, or on tussocky margins, sober grey herons wait for prey, their bodies in huddled ease, or with tense eagerness and yellow eyes ablaze with hungry desire. A giddy young rudd, unheeding, rising to a floating insect or a sedge-bird's feather, a water-vole, unsuspecting, swimming by—when the heron's dagger-bill with a lightning thrust lays hold of it. The bird, now all animation, gulps down fish or vole, dips his bill in the water, then shakes it sagely; and, looking around as if reassuring himself that he has not been overlooked, utters a harsh scream, picks up his green legs behind him as he lifts himself on his big rounded wings, to alight again beside some weedy ditch he wots of, where water-shrews frolic and frogs are sagely studying insect life.

One scarcely needs catalogue the Broadland birds that swim or haunt these placid lagoons; the naturalist who would hobnob with them, with no malice aforethought, is wise to visit them in May, for the wild life of these Silences is then still free of disturbing craft and trippers, and the turmoil of the Water Pageantry. In merry May the birds wax bold and confident, laying their fears and pusillanimity aside until their evil days shall come.

Marshland flowers may not all yet have awakened, but the lover of birds will overlook this in the joys of the bird-song and the delights revealed by his binoculars. Dr. Emerson, Dutt, Ernest Suffling, and Christopher Davies have written largely on the charms of Broadland springtime; Richard Lubbock and Stevenson, and the Rev. M. C. H. Bird, have fascinatingly described the finny, furry, and feathery denisons of these alluring waterways. . . .

In May, 1920, I had the good fortune to be guest and supercargo of a quartet of eminent British ornithologists, who had determined to hear and see the Norfolk bitterns. We set sail from Wroxham, "the first let of the season," on the 12th, in the well-found, comfortable pleasure wherry "Reindeer." Its huge white sail, bellying to a favourable breeze, drove the cutwater through curling waters, as a ploughshare turns moist earth. A quick run past Salhouse and Horning, brought us to Thurne Mouth, where we rounded up for gay "Potter," now empty and silent, with her shutters up. As one winds along upon these rivers, the vaster portion of the waters lie hidden; only here and there blotches and streaks of pearliness, held in the greenery, are seen as broads and river-reaches, glide into view. . . .

Our skipper was an "original," as well as an aboriginal, and also knew his work. His outlook on life had been broadened on the canals of Belgium; and he had seen strenuous service in the King's Navee under Admiral Craddock. He and our cook had been messmates in one of the only two ships that had not gone down in the Pacific sea-fight. Brown's wrinkled face and humorous eyes

would screw into a merry focus when some choice reminiscence cropped up in his mind. . . .

"Once," said he, "when I was in the Service, one of our chaps went ashore at Dover to buy suffin', but he went and speckelated in beer instead, and was comin' aboard, full up, when a hand was dropt athort his shoulder, and he was marched off into clink. Next mornin' he went afore the captain.

" 'What hev you to say about it?' axed the captain, who wornt harf a bad 'un.

" 'Nothin', my hearty,' says the chap, with a wink, 'perwidin' you don't say anythink about it yerself, sir!'

"The skipper, leastwise, the captain," concluded Brown, "shets his eye, and thinks a minute.

" 'Alrite,' says he. 'Dismiss!' and the chap dismisses!"

On this trip the weeds in Hickling Broad made it next to impossible to sail across it, so we staked down in Kendal Dyke, to make minor excursions in the sailing dinghy into the haunts of the wild fowl that we had come to see. Even then our sailing was so much hampered that we had occasionally to lift the centre-board as it fouled the water moss, which rose nearly to the surface, and to clear the rudder also. When we hit clear water we romped along. During the war some tons of this plaguey weed had been drawn out and sent to the paper mills; some sort of "brown" paper was made of it, but at best it was only fit for wrapping soap in. "Indeed" said my friend, who had been engaged in the experiment, "it was hardly good enough for that."

The ditches veining the marshes were bright with frog-bit and water violets; the marshes themselves alive with snipes, whose chirruping and drumming were heard by night and day. On the easterly wind came the "boom" of the bitterns out of the reedy masses.

On the Friday morning (12th), in particular, the clamour of the bitterns was incessant: their "booming" early awakened me; their cries were like the sounding of horns. I joined Linkhorn, a keeper, and we discussed this strange cry, which had become quite a commonplace to him. He thought five booms were the usual number uttered in succession, although he had heard six. "A gentleman," said he, "once brazed me out that it never made six." So they decided to locate a bird and count his output: the very first *bona fide* count ran up to six.

"Was the doubter convinced?" I asked.

"Well," laughed Linkhorn, "he says, 'That's worth half a pound of 'bacca,' and as I got the 'bacca, it certainly fared as if he was!'"

My friends and I heard the bittern boom seven times in one corner of the Broad; and twice, much nearer, did we distinctly count eight. Now, how was this booming managed? A gunner assured the Rev. M. C. H. Bird that "bitterns grasp a bunch of reed with their feet, and balance themselves upon it, keeping the tip of their up-pointed beak on a level with the top of the reeds." The reed grasping may have been merely automatically performed, for the bird will boom on level ground, and in confinement. The bill certainly is upraised, to give full vent to its music; just as a black-

backed gull stretches his neck and elevates his head to yell.

Reverting back to the number of booms: Mr. T. A. Coward counted nine, but admits that the first singer might have been overlapped by a rival. I had an excellent opportunity of listening to one individual, and seven blasts of his trumpet seemed his average; I did not catch but one back-draught before the uttering of the first, but distinctly did I recognize the seemingly laborious indrawn "oom" between the louder booms. Differing in the quality of the music, I likened these variations to those of alternations of the up and down noises produced by a wheezy old pump's handle.

The keepers punted us to a wild, squashy level bristling with drab reed stumps that stood in moisture, with a phalanx of uncut dead reeds all around that recalled Milton's description:

A boggy syrtis, neither sea,
Nor good dry land.

Higher tides from the river soaked these swamps, and low ebbs drew the waters back into the channels. The punts swam deeply in the drains with the weight of us; and as my friends were proof against getting wet feet, I remained in charge while they went in Indian file to see the small bundle of dead flags and rushes that had been the bitterns' nursery. Two dead squabs lay within it; the others had skulked into hiding. Under one limp body was discovered a burying beetle (*Necrophorus*), an insect whose mission in life is to scent out little dead bodies, scratch the earth from under them, and



RUFFS FIGHTING

act, in fact, as sexton. But what hope on a wet swamp had the misguided thing for a safe development of egg and larvæ?

Our two broadmen were statuesque fellows, as they stood erect in each punt's stern, quanting with slender, toed poles, steadily, silently, like gondoliers, and with easy grace of movement. As we left the deserted nest the keepers discussed their bitterns. Like as in human families, young bitterns differ in size, due to a succession of births. The hen bird sat as soon as her first egg was laid, which accounts for these differences referred to. The bittern babies are a rapacious generation, and are fed from dawn to dusk upon small fishes, eels, water beetles, little water voles and frogs.

Among other interesting incidents of this trip was a stroll across a drier level, where redshanks were nesting; and when we were hidden among a clump of small beech and alders, we had a pleasurable half hour watching a pair of Montagu's harriers that sailed around in airy circles. As we quanted back to the wherry we passed a mother shoveller with her mottled black and yellow and down-clad family, which bobbed and scuttled around the broken bank, whilst the old bird lay flat down to make herself less conspicuous, at the same time squealing lustily her instructions, her odd cries of "*bridget! bridget!*" only ending when the ducklings were well out upon the Broad and she herself had joined them. . . .

Much blame for the extermination of some of our characteristic Broadland birds has been laid to the charge of those who so closely drained our low-

lands and swampy places. It would be fairer to lay most of it to the rapacity of bird-skin and egg collectors, who decimated the ranks of the old birds, and diminished the numbers of their prospective young by remorseless egging. If you want proofs, read Lubbock's "Fauna of Norfolk," or the Pagets' sketch of the "Natural History of Yarmouth": open it at page x (Introduction). Do not rely alone upon my word for it. Had not ruthless slaughter of such now rare birds as spoonbills, cranes, avocets, ruffs, and black terns obtained, they would have bred with us to-day. Since the remnant of the bitterns was protected, these interesting birds have increased and become established again; and Stevenson's remark that "I believe this species has altogether deserted us during the breeding season" does not hold good to-day. . . .

At 5 p.m. one May evening in 1919 I took train to Acle with Mr. Percy H. Palmer, and, having had tea with the family, proceeded to an obscure corner of the Broad district by motor-car, Mrs. Palmer accompanying us. At Sutton we picked up one Thain, a marshman, who, with several helpers, had just rescued by rope and pulleys from a boggy hole a valuable horse. We were soon upon the water, Thain rowing us upstream, turning shortly a watery bending, and then threading a narrow passage-way between a maze of young sedges and dead reeds that margined the dark-brown trickle whereon lay wind-ruffled lily-pads, with here and there a breaking bud upon the surface,

Making the current, forced a while to stray,
Murmur and bubble as it shoots away.

The grey skies and the dying out wind did not encourage a floral display; only stray wisps of ragged robin seemed to dare them: not a midge or a mosquito had ventured out. Two pairs of red-shanks chortled indignantly at our intrusion; five wife-deserting mallards flew around us with suspicion; the coots and grebes appeared too busy in the thicker reed-beds to paddle out and upbraid us. Where was the bitterns' nest?

My companions waded through the sopped swamp in rubber boots, but I, all unprepared, did not hesitate to splash ankle-deep with them, for the sake of what promised, my boots filling up and running over with water at the first onset.

"The tide," said Thain, "had bin hained by the nor'erly breeze sendin' the water up," thus flooding the low level of vegetation by some inches; otherwise the merest sloppiness would have distinguished our trackway. A bit of fluffy string fluttering at the top of a dry reed-stem marked the location of the nest, which practically floated among the sedges. It was a low, squat, damp enough bundle of dead reed-leaves and splinters that contained five hearty, corduroy coloured chicks, each clad in downy pyjamas, very like llama pelt in texture, warm undoubtedly, and no bad fit: as capital a bit of protective coloration as I ever saw, when taking into consideration dull drabs of the reeds and other dead vegetation which bed and bed-curtains were made of. Nor did the bluish, spear-shaped mouths of the gaping birdlings—wide-straddled, either for begging or from passive defiance, ill match the young green sedges and the upspringing marsh weeds around.

One over-modest or bashful youngster, evidently for his size the eldest of the family, certainly resented our one or two minutes' interview, and pushed out a leg, threatening to jump overboard, until we dissuaded him not to, when he quietly submitted and squatted again with the other youngsters on that worse than slovenly platform which was on a par for artistry with the rickety platform of a wood pigeon's shake-down. Our guide was careful, though trying not to show it, that our coming should not be unduly wearisome to the young natives, of which he seemed genuinely proud.

He assured us that six eggs had been laid here, but that one had been a hopeless one, and that he had taken a much too large eel out of one nipper's gape, and so had "probably seft its life." . . .

We heard the male bittern's unmusical boom; and what shall I liken it unto? Saith an old nature book-writer, "The mire-drum . . . from the noise it makes, which may be heard a long way off . . . it imitates the bellowing of a bull, and will give four, five, or six bombs" (!). I thought our friend the bellower's boom seemed a bit broken, and that it boomed haphazardly, as if troubled or excited (probably we had made it so). Now it came on the light wind very like the sound you make when blowing into an empty bottle; now it seemed tinny, like the deep-throated blast of a far-away lugger's syren, and kept on, varying in continuity as well as in intonation. This booming was not a "dreadful noise" as described by another old writer: it was weird, eerie, rare, unique. To me it was music sublime and appropriate, as are most of the cries of the Open. There is one cry, however, now-

adays, heard on our rivers—from fretful, staked-down billy-goats upon the banks—that would get on the nerves of a patriarch. . . .

Our motor-car waited, and directly we were spinning along country roads towards Caister, where my friends deposited me on a tram-car. At nine I emptied my boots of water and hung my clothes to dry—small inconveniences to a case-hardened haunter of Breydon, who usually gets his money's worth of fun and interest even in the most untoward circumstances,—and mine was not a despicable bit of Broadlandering within the four short hours.



REED-BUNTING

CHAPTER VI

A RIVERSIDE PHILOSOPHER

I do not value chiefly a man's uprightness and benevolence, which are, as it were, his stem and leaves. . . . I want the flower and fruit of a man ; that some fragrance be wafted over from him to me, and some ripeness flavour our intercourse.

—THOREAU.

OUR run down Kendal Dyke on a free wind was soon accomplished ; we disturbed no birds, for they were quieter in obscure corners of the reeded Sounds than in the open, save a parcel of swans, whose dark-downed young were beak-pulling at water weeds, three feet below the surface, whilst their cone-shaped tail-ends bobbed like fishermen's floats above it.

We met a flotilla of the popular twenty-footers tacking up the narrow Dyke, threading it in herring-bone fashion ; so my skipper had to do as approaching boats should do—give and take. However reckless cars may be a-road, sailing-folk are courteous at least for self-preservation's sake. Had it been my turn at the wheel I fear I should have stood by, and watched this procession ; but my skipper's mathematical mind revelled in imaginary angles and suchlike Euclidian propositions ; and he ran our shuttle of a boat through those six cross-stitching shuttles with the sureness of a

weaver's carpet patterns. I verily believe we might have cracked walnuts between boats had we been so minded, but we never touched. . . .

The Martham Ferry was closed; hay-carts and tall wheels rumbled noisily upon it, as did the shod hooves of sturdy horses. It was rather late for the marshmen's harvest ending. Tufts of hay and marsh stuff tumbled on the pontoon as the springless tumbrils jolted, and on the marsh roads as they jerked over loose flint stones and in hollows.

A pert little octogenarian, clad in homely attire, and with straps below his knees, as land-workers wear them, like Horatio, held the bridge. A felt hat topped his wise small grey head, and a fringe of fox-tinted beard half-mooned his aged chin. "Billy," as his co-workers called him, acted as ferryman, levering off and chain-manipulating the heavy pontoon in and out the gap—out as impatient yachts-folk needed, and closed when hay-wagons at spells demanded.

Billy had a lively tongue, soft at will as a cat's paw, when her claws lie *perdu*; and also voiced frank, even tart, opinions upon men and things which, spoken in the dear old Norfolk brogue, warmed my heart towards this rustic riverside philosopher. A wagon had just rumbled over, and Old Man started to shift fallen hay. Looking up, he spake:

"Now, then, together, du yow want ter go trew?"

"Bor," said I, "we dew; I'm comin' trew, as sune as yow shift yer owd pontune!"

"Yow're werry clever, yung man!" he rebukely remarked, but by no means offensively. I

thought of the forty-two children of Beth-el, who mocked Elisha, and I relented. I know how sanguinary can be two she bears!

"But I'm broad Norfik myself," I said, "and I'm proud on it."

"Well, then, I arn't," he snapped; "an' if I'd hed yar chances of bein' edjicated, I'd speak plain English!"

Bravo! I thought; but I saw I had ruffled the dear old boy's feelings.

The boats were speedily "trew," the "Walrus" wallowing through last in the procession, and we moored at the bank opposite Bracey's Staithe, myself much disappointed, as I had hoped to angle there, in ten feet of water, in a hole where bream bit ravenously at night in 1895 and 1896. It was now a tangled maze of water weeds and lily-pads. After tea I rowed in the dinghy "Florrie" to the bridge, to chat with my client, for at 7.30 Horatio was still there, dogmatic and garrulous. A wagon, over-much jolting, broke its connecting pin, when fore-end and tumbril dissolved partnership, and the hay and all went over. Billy looked dismayed, the carters much annoyed; the horses were led home, and the wreckage left until the morrow; and the Old Man had well earned his night's repose.

A short way off I espied an angler, sitting late, patient as a cormorant, a gentleman every inch of him, in dress and manners, and as his exquisite voice and musical English proclaimed him. It is ill speaking, to ask, "Getting any bites?" of an angler, so I merely sauntered by, remarking on my own ill luck. He asked a question or two, and waxed reminiscent; he knew Norfolk fish-haunts

well—as much so as his own Devon and its trout. He revered old Izaak, and he loved the Open Air. "Do you know anything of Breydon?" he asked. "I have lately read with pleasure a certain book upon it." He mentioned the title; and I assured him that I knew the author as well as I knew myself. He looked, held out his hand, and we shook. How small the world does seem! . . .

At 6.30 next morning, our porridge platters had been spooned clean, and soon after my skipper was put ashore, to go to town on business. Three young amateur yachtsmen lay berthed a little way off. One sturdy fellow with a blue-black chin came and tapped on the cabin top. Could I lend them a razor? They had lost theirs. Of all fellows to approach; but I remembered that Captain Kettle had recently shorn his rigid stubble, and found up his blade, and handed it out. A gentleman from another yacht sauntered up and we nodded. I opened out on hobbies: the bait took, and he soon told me that china and old pottery was his; so we talked Worcester, and Staffordshire, and—

He had once bought a Toby jug—genuine!—in a cottage, for fifteen shillings, and sold it at a sale for fifty pounds. I wondered why he did not write books—I sometimes earned twopence an hour at the game!

Thus do strangers chum up on the Broads: acting neighbourly, forming friendships, whilst some passionless natures are as frigid and stand-offish as the gilded tin cock on St. Nicholas' spire on a nor'ery wind, treating the townsfolk with aloofness and disdain. . . .

Billy turned up fairly early, as did the wagoners,

with their new pin for the damaged one. I rowed over and offered Billy a helping hand, which he gladly accepted. I praised horses, as he showed interest in them, although no favourites of mine. I remarked that they looked like being ousted by motor machinery.

"Bor," said he, "hosses are comin' into theer own agin!" and cited one instance where they had—ten of them on one farm—come back to replace steam ploughs and mechanical power. "And don't you talk of the good old days, for they wor bad 'uns." He'd had enuf of turnips and small wages in his young time. Chapels! Yes! Village chapels had been useful in sweetening the life of the poor rustics, and educating them, and teaching 'em that afore God all men wor equal. He know'd what it wor in his younger time to earn a bob a day; and to try and live upon it. He hadn't much to thank the squire and the parson for, and said it with a decided snap. And they'd got the wote, and used et! and "wuth a stiff lip." Billy had got a good listener.

"Well, old chap," I hinted, "one man's as good as another, and a dowsed sight better!" I don't know how he interpreted this dictum: it was one slightly beyond *his* own philosophy.

But Billy and I had to part company, for the last loads of hay were being hurried up, and we ourselves had to start downstream. So I caught the old chap's hand, and before his independence of spirit had time to show itself, I said in his ear:

"You go to the Methodist Chapel, don't you?"

"Yes, I do," he answered. "*Sartinly!*"

"Then I won't offend you by this," slipping a

coin into his hand. "Put that in the collection box on Sunday!"

"Ah, bor, that I'll *dew*!" said old friend Billy, and I knew we were wholly reconciled.

At noon Captain Kettle had returned with stores for the lazarette; he had been much bored by last night's contribution of mosquito bites, of which I had not one to show, although I had swatted a fat insect on my hand that left a streak of someone's blood two inches in length. The ammonia liniment was applied with soothing effects.

We started, as usual, with a head wind, and plenty of it; we lost it in negotiating the bridges, but met it again beyond. Folks were at midday mealing, and a busy queue they looked on the port bank—some dining in the cockpit, others inside the cabins. Most stared wonderingly at the "Walrus," as at a floating sea-monster; and here and there one added sarcastic remarks which might have been returned handsomely had I not remembered the patch nailed on a portside plank. I dare say a cage of monkeys floating by would have convulsed some who see fun in everything. . . .

A big yacht, the "Iverna," splendidly handled by a sturdy skipper, like a cornered white whale dashed by, making short boards, and claiming some attention, not unmixed with admiration. Her long unicorn-like bowsprit looked dangerously superfluous in such restricted waters, and made some at anchor breathe quickly; but there was always an inch or two's margin of safety. But when she reached less crowded reaches, her bowsprit mowed

down the slim reeds in long swaths, to jump erect again at its passing. Such sea-rigs on Broadland waters do not seem at home to-day among the handsome, handlesome sloop-riggers, with their genteel jibsails. But it was, for all that, a very pretty bit of man-handling that her skipper and owner may well be proud of.

We reached Thurne Mouth at eventide and at my desire the skipper turned the boat's nose towards a lone spot, where, beside tall reeds, we made fast ; and so, having settled for the night, lifted the cockpit's trap and proceeded to bale and count up the day's takings, after our heavy tacking. Net result : twelve buckets of Thurne water, which made no difference to the river, although it did to us.

Then the skipper left the tiller for the kettle, and got late tea on the way ; whilst I squared up the raffle in the cabin in readiness for turning in, and having lighted the lamp sat a while reading, and gossiping at intervals. I could not but help thinking that this wild corner, lonely as it is at summer eventide, must be forlorn enough on wintry days to anyone but a naturalist.

The rattling of the kettle-lid broke my reverie, and we sat to an enjoyable repast : so soon can one come back from dreamland into the real and physical one, by even the most insignificant things of life.

But my skipper is usually a man of few words, and long spells of silence, with which I do not quarrel. I admit I belong to a species of animal which is highly gregarious, like elephants, but even they have "rogues" which go solitary, and take no delight in society of their own kind. I enjoy periods of seclusion, hence these driftings around,

and lonely wanderings on marsh and seashore; and have wondered that had I been marooned like Crusoe, I should have quoted Cowper:

O solitude, where are thy charms
That sages have seen in thy face?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms,
Than reign in this horrible place.

But Crusoe was not a naturalist, whose most compatible chum *is* solitude. To such a one the wee birds prattle, around him the water voles frolic, heedless insects dance, and flirt, and flutter across the pages of his book in the lamplight.

The more orthodox man afloat delights in the society of his fellows; when the day's run is over the yacht is, by preference or by custom, moored at a staithe, in the company of its fellows, and night is made companionable and bright by lamp and music and song and laughter. The social instinct predominates.

Robust manhood—amateur and professional—from the yachts, in merry mood, repair to the waterside inns, prompted more by kindred tastes than thirst, as men draw to their clubs in other spheres, to talk tacks and jibes and water-lore generally. The poet Crabbe well describes the cult in his terse, crisp rhyming, when

" They come for pleasure in their leisure hour
And they enjoy it to their utmost power ;

In small smok'd room
When curling fumes in lazy wreaths arise,
And prozing toppers rub their winking eyes ;
When the long tale, renew'd when last they met,
Is splic'd anew, and is unfinish'd yet.

Well ! Every man in his own order ! Every son
of man to his own inclinations !

CHAPTER VII

THE GHOST OF THE ABBEY

For the most part there was no recognition of human life in the night, no human breathing was heard, only the breathing of the wind. As we sat up, kept awake by the novelty of our situation . . . we could detect only a ripple in the water ruffling the disc of a star. At intervals . . . the throttled cry of an owl . . . a sudden pause, and deeper and more conscious silence.

—THOREAU.

DIRK, when introducing "Concord" to his English readers, remarks: "A gentleman rows a few miles up a river and returns; he spends a week in doing this, and several hundred pages are required to epitomize a record of it." At this moment I sit in the "Walrus's" cockpit, with this charming volume in my hand. I have been condoning the philosophy, skipping the historic, and revelling in the Nature word-pictures presented at intervals like chaste etchings, as he has portrayed them. To me these are as the sunlight which breaks through masses of majestic clouds moving across the azure. . . .

Evening draws on apace, care-free yachts-folk have made fast for the night in crowded and in lone places, and my skipper lies asleep upon his settle in the cabin. He is far too mathematically minded to be sentimental, although the magic of the Broadlands at rare intervals takes possession

of his being. Few there be who, feeling intensely, like Thoreau, can interpret their impressions and emotions in written words that startle, or that recall Solomon's apt aphorism—"a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

There was ushered in an eerie night, wrapt in a silence that was broken only occasionally by the harsh but befitting cry of a heron, the thin shrill screech of a noctule bat answering him back, and the "sluss" of a fish making drifting rings upon the tidal water. I sat there captivated, drinking in the delights of a summer night. The sun disappeared unobserved over the marshes in a dim grey pall behind us, and the old grey ruins of the Abbey became silhouetted against a background of drabness that was broken for a short space where a streak of feeble moonlight struggled to illumine the gloaming.

Slowly fades away the sunset glow,

And o'er the mist-wrapt marsh the plover wails,
The wheeling nightjar glides with mothly flight.

Shade and shadow blended in darkness, the unseen reeds drooped their leaves without a quiver, and the little warblers and the young swallows slumbered in their fastnesses, among the gnats and midges that had survived their onslaughts at sunset, to be warred against once more when the morrow's sun hath dispersed the night-dews. A ghostly owl upon his silent, down-textured pinions tripped inaudibly through the calm night, to break the hush with a startling cry across the river, that made the little field mice anxious, and to scuttle into their burrows.

Somehow, one's mind becomes attuned to the ghostlier sounds of the night, which seem so much in keeping with its solemnity and impressiveness—"as if," says one writer, "it were the dark and tearful side of music," when ghosts walk, and spirits flit. I recall to mind the ancient Breydoner, sitting in his tarry Noah's Ark beside the cabin stove, who, on hearing in the night the mournful chorus of some night-flying gulls, suddenly started, and pointing upwards awesomely, made remark: "Hark! tu em! They're allust at that game of a night-time; why can't them old fishermen what ha' tarned ter gulls lave us alone!"

No footstep announced his coming, nor was I taken aback, as I turned, when the well-remembered voice of my old friend, the Monk of St. Benet's Abbey, broke the stillness.

"So thou art a-broading once more, my son!" quoth the aged Benedictine, as I caught a glimpse of him standing in a gapway between the reeds. There seemed to be a strange light illumining his presence, which did not, however, disconcert me, hence I boldly answered him back:

"Welcome, my father; and so thou dost still haunt these venerable quarters!" I remarked.

"That do I, friend," said he; "but the centuries have found me growing unrestful, although not for my sins," (and he crossed himself); "but I am longing for that Rest that Remaineth, and the Peace of Forgetfulness." His voice had lost that jovial and vivacious ring which distinguished it at

our last interview, and there seemed the ghost of a tear in his eye.

"Many are the changes which I have witnessed here around," he went on; "for a full seven hundred years have the Abbey grounds been consecrated. When Egbert was king there was here a chapel of wood erected by Saxon recluses; when the wolf and the wild boar roamed in weedy swamps and scrubby uplands. Later, in A.D. 1014, Wolfric, and after him Sweyne, the Dane, made history here; and then the latter's son, King Canute, of blessed memory, who disguised himself as a swineherd, in order to inspect and fathom a lie, came hither and disproved certain ill reports. He founded the Abbey and enriched it. For many centuries the Abbey prospered until a traitor abbot—a curse upon him!—betrayed and delivered us into the hands of Henry VIII, in 1537; and who, at the Dissolution despoiled us and gave us over to the Philistines and nobles, who, with or without written permit, filched lands, and swamps, and pools——"

"And *Broads*!" I suggested; "but you enjoyed some good and rare times and seasons, old man," I said.

"That did I," he assented, "for the time was when we lived on the fat of the land—venison and flesh of wild boars, bustards and curlews, heron-shaws and rabbits, 'fesants and ptrychys'——"

"*Pheasants and partridges*!" I ejaculated, in surprise.

"That had we!" he went on, smiling rather sadly. "We had Hyckling spoonbills, also cranes and wydgyms [widgeon], larks innumerable, and



MY GHOSTLY VISITOR.

mallards, bitterns, and greylag geese in abundance; from the waters we had great sturgeons, and salmons, not to mention pykes and burbots, smelts and silvery sea-trout, and porpesses; and divers others of fish and game from fen and hillsides, wood and brecklands, and from the rivers and the sea. Our tables creaked with fat things, and the fragments of our broken victuals, which were not seldom choice delicacies, were given unto the poor, which ever did crowd our gates."

"Surely, father, you must have pauperized the serfs and henchmen, and encouraged the poorer people."

"Nay, my son, not so fast," he said, reproachfully. "Charity is long-suffering ever, and turned none away, neither the deserving nor the lazy. It was our almoner's task daily to give unto them the broken meats and the doles——"

"What!" I said, incredulously—"doles! surely a mixed evil, as in to-day!"

"Hearken unto me," he insisted. "Our table was over bountiful, our monks grew dainty, and the poor were many, although some were tramps—yea! tramps—who roved from convent to convent, from monastery to monastery, working not at all, but fattening on the bread of idleness. A State document described them as 'valiant, mighty, and idle beggars and vagabonds . . . drove beasts and mychers [mouchers] which should be driven away and compelled to labour.' And there were some sorry rascals among them."

"The breed is not yet exterminated," I remarked; but he continued:

"The sturdier of these pressed to the front,

shouldering away the widow, and the fatherless; but our almoner insisted that the weaker be first served."

At that moment the grunting and squealing of disturbed swine was heard across the river.

"I was recently viewing the Abbey ruins," I said, "and, lo! the sacred precincts were defiled by a dozen huge fat swine, that rooted up the turf and soil of the marshland, seeking roots and grubs. Hath Circe cast her spell upon the priests——"

He held up his hand and rebuked me.

"How came you by so much game?" I asked, turning the subject.

"The fish I told you of in 1919; the wild fowl received we from the falconers and squires. Birds of prey abounded; it was quite a commonplace to see kites chasing larks and quails; the peregrine harassing rook and mallard, and shoveller, and rousing the wood dove from the tree-tops.

"There came to the Abbey princes with gyrfalcons, squires with jerkins and tassel-gentles, and right fayre laydies with merlins on their gloved wrists, a-riding proud palfreys. The yeomen favoured the goshawk, a handsome bird, which was common then in Eastern England, as well as imported from Germany, which was much sought after for its daring and energy, and which attacked the largest game with much speed, overtaking it by a continued flight, rather than by stooping and pouncing upon it, as doth the peregrine. Its docility begat for it the name of gentle-falcon."

He left off here, as if a-wearied, and sighed.

"You interest me greatly, my father," I said. "Speak on."

"I remember me," he continued, "that once John Paston of Caister galloped up to the Abbey—in 1472, I think it was; he was keenly eager to possess a goshawk, to replace one that had killed for him bustards and hares; and also many heron-shaws, and itself had been impaled and slain upon the shrewd bill of one. Rumour had reached his ears of a haggard-hawk [wild one] that haunted the Abbey grounds, killing prey for itself. Later, he wrote to the Abbot, as followeth:

"'Right trusty friend, I comend me to yow preying yow to, an I axe no more gods of yow whyll the world standyth, but a goss-hawke. . . . I am dyeing for thys hawk. I pray God send me my mwyd [moulted] gosshawk in haste, or rather than fayle, a sowyr [young] hawk.

"'Wretyn at Norwyche [date, etc.],

"'J. PASTON."

"I fear me, my friend, that John Paston was unlucky with his hawks; but later some squirely joker did dispatch unto him a magpie, for he wrote: 'I sye [saw] the pye, and herd it spek; and be God it is not worth a crowe . . . be God, it were a shame to kep it in a cage.'"

"You told me once, my father, of Henry VII coming to the Abbey in 1486. This man, the King, much appeals to my imagination, as do most outlandish lovers of the Open. Was he not great with the falcons?"

"He was, indeed," answered the monk, "but I did not like him greatly. He was an unpleasant person, dour, haughty of mien, niggardly and covetous, and when he visited the Abbey, neither dispensed largesse nor kindly words to those who

served him ; and, moreover, was exceedingly vain and over-dressed, and loved only himself. Our Abbot summed him up as a bloodsucking vampire, out for shekels, with the snout of a shrewmouse, the conscience of a dunge-hawk [skua gull], and the cunning of a fox. And no similes could have been more befitting."

"Not one good word hast thou said of *him*," said I.

"Well, he had certainly a redeeming feature here and there, my son," went on the monk ; "he encouraged the Flemings in our midst ; and it was they who taught the East Coast folk to turn desolate heron-haunted swamps into rich pastures ; and he made the country peaceful after long bitter years of warfare, for the people were over-wearied of the Feuds of the Roses.

"He vastly enjoyed hawking, when here, over the Ludham and the Abbey marshlands ; sending us in many bitterns, herons, and mallards, besides bustards and other game ; not (for a wonder !) disposing of such as he needed not, as some titled folk do send their netted wild fowl and shot game, to-day, to Leadenhall Market. Such a thought may have escaped his cupidity of spirit, forsooth !

"He had a queer wit, had Henry, for instead of hanging Lambert Simnel, the baker boy who aped Earl of Warwick, and became a rebel, a year after the king had been hereabouts ; he made a scullion first of him, and then clad him in a falconer's jerkin, and sent him hither ; and a right smart falconer he was ! . . . I must be going my son."

"Tarry a while longer, old man," I prayed him.

"I will, for a little while," he said, continuing.

"For there was much gaiety at times, that brake our fasting, and ill days, when the Abbot insisted upon chastisement of our bodies, when our tables held but slender provender, meet only for a recluse: cole-wort, boiled, and served up in a wooden platter, seasoned with nought better than a pinch of salt, and no richer an accompaniment than a hunch of coarse barley bread, in very modest proportions; whilst the water pitcher furnished our only beverage.

"Yet memories of these interludes waxed but hazy when the tables creaked with temptations to gluttony; and when a flask of Bacharach wine, of the first vintage, and of great age, had been rummaged out of some spider-webbed corner of the cellar, had been brought in by a lay brother, who acted as porter.

"And they were as merry a crew in the kitchen: serf and porter, page-boy and falconer, scullion and kitchen maid, who followed in the train of belted knight and nobleman, and squire and fair laydie. How lustily they sang grace before meat, and how merrily they sang after it, all such refrains as these:

The Friars of Fail drank nut-brown ale,
The best that ever was tasted;
The monks of St. Benet's made gude kale,
On Fridays, when they had fasted.
We'd rooster and pigeon,
And bustard and wigeon,
A right merry crowd were we!
Sing hay tri trix, and trim go trix
Under the greenwood tree.

Trooped squire and dame, with falcons game,
Yeomen and knight and jester.
O'er quaking swamp the horsemen romp,
Yon herne—the hawks shall best her.

How the palfreys race !

'Tis a famous chase !

We will sit us down, and see ;

Sing hay tri trix, and trim go trix,

Under the greenwood tree !

" My father," I said, as the sound of a sigh escaped his lips, " thou must feel lonely ; and I sorrow for thee ; I would that I could speak words that would comfort thee."

" Right well, my son," he made remark, " I know that thou speakest truly, for thou hast a soft heart for all who may be sad and are tearful ; but yonder heap of broken masonry is all that remains of the Abbey's past glory : ' Man that is born of Woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down : he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not.' *Sic transit gloria mundi.*"

I awoke with a start : it was past the midnight hour. I rubbed my eyes, wondering whether so real-seeming an adventure could be but a dream. I instinctively called the monk by name, but only the rippling of the tide answered me, my lonely friend having departed. Peradventure, he had gone to join himself unto the Wandering Jew, who, from an excess of zeal, tradition says, spat upon our Lord ; and, mayhap, they will yet enter into the Peace Eternal, and the Abiding Rest, that shall never more be disturbed, nor broken. . . .

O thou Hallowed and Venerable old Pile !—

90 THE CRUISE OF THE "WALRUS"

Thy sacred tapers' lights are gone,
Grey moss has clad the altar stone,
The Holy Image is overthrown,

The bell has ceased to toll:
The long ribb'd aisles are burst and shrunk,
The holy shrines to ruin sunk,
Departed is the Pious Monk,—
God's blessing on his soul.



HENRY VII

(After an Ancient Drawing)

CHAPTER VIII

LUSTY BARTON BREAM

But I early learned that from almost any stream in a trout country the true angler could take trout, and that the great secret was this, that whatever bait you used—worm, grasshopper, grub, or fly—there was one thing you must always put upon your hook, namely, your heart; when you bait your hook with your heart the fish always bite . . . it is a morsel they love above everything else. . . . I have seen the born angler take a string of trout . . . on the most unpromising day.

—JOHN BURROUGHS.

THE American naturalist, in "Locusts and Wild Honey," has told us but half a truth, for an angler *must* put his heart and soul into his craft or he will not excel; but it is as certain, from another point of view, that he has no heart, or why do the gaspings, the mute terror, the slow suffocation of his victims make vain appeal to his pity? It may be that I make small bags, and usually none at all, because I cannot to-day go whole-heartedly into the contest. But all the philosophy in the world will never exterminate the angler; and I frankly admit that he appeals to me as much as do his fishes. His hobby lures him to the quiet haunts that Izaak Walton loved, and to whose gentle heart and dulcet pen the world owes a very great deal.

The dawn of the 17th broke smilelessly. The greyness of the night scarcely touched at sunrise,

save where a few streaks of silvery shining, away to the east'ard, heralded the coming of a newborn day. The Abbey ruins at three were in deep shadow, a mysterious, Sphinx-like pile—fit monument to a long dead past; a sort of sentinel keeping guard over the bones of long dead monks and friars. At seven tea was brewing, and the bacon a-frizzling, when my matter-of-fact cook and steward recalled me from my reverie to the grosser animal delights. . . .

The sky looked troubled as we cast off our moorings, and hauled in the slack of the mainsheet, and pointed our stem towards the Ant, a gust of wind smiting our lugsail and wildly jibing it, with more than a threat to lift the mast with it. The "Walrus" rolled heavily, and righted herself in a twinkling. Then the spirit of the wind relented and rain besprinkled the cabin top, after Ventosus' parting kick. Swallows flew dejectedly, trapeing low along the reeds where probably their game clung for shelter. One could distinctly hear the snap of a swallow's mandibles as it came by and whipped up a dislodged fly from a reed stem. One of the crew on deck was sufficient for a wet half hour, so I turned in, and amused myself scribbling a short article for "Natureland" on the "Natter-jack toad." A little breeze shortly cropped up, and behaving somewhat to our advantage, we again spun merrily along, making the most of every slant of wind. We carried the wind to the shadow of the rule o' thumb Ludham bridge, lowered in a trice the sail, and whipped out the mast, our speed carrying us through and beyond it, and the sail was filled again without losing way, and on and on

we sped, doubling curves as a greyhound doubles with its quarry.

At the foot of How Hill the halter of the "Walrus" was hitched to a stump. The skipper stropped his razor, and smoothed the folds of his favourite neck-tie; the Lord High Admiral browned his boots, and brushed his hat; and together we wended our way up the slope to the White House, where a warm welcome awaited us, and a civilized lunch was here our portion, made the more appetizing by pleasant gossip of kindred spirits. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." Our host and hostess sauntered with us down to the staithe, and bade us god-speed, to the accompaniment of a camera's clickings.

The Ant meandereth between green marshes and, moreover, convolves with a serpentine progress on the tides, calling to mind the yokel's honest opinion, that "them as ploughed thet theer furrow, orter ha' seed t'ut, it wor done a bit straiter." In consequence, our progress was erratic; what we gained on one tack was lost on the other. Nearing Irstead Shoals we did a bit better, notwithstanding the canopying of the trees—which make for beauty—because the draught was in our favour. I hailed a couple of natives at work upon a stack, but they proved fractious, like browsing bears, and were unworthy of answering back. Peradventure other wasps had stung them, so we desisted.

Bravo! Barton Broad! how it wooed us to a rollicking spin upon its clear waters—now as bare of weeds as a sandy beach—and so merrily did our "Walrus" take to it that we wound in and out, for fun of it, among reedy islands, and in rushy

bights. The absence of weeds—the lily-pad acres, and swaths of snaky herbage—seemed so remarkable to me that I inquired, when I could, the meaning of it, and was told that last year's salts had crept upstream, and into the broad, mingling with the fresher waters, to the destruction, more or less, of the subaqueous vegetation. This seemed feasible enough. I was once asked to suggest a remedy for a polluted, but pretty, broad connected with a river by a ditch. The bream were attacked by a fungus, which killed off many and had weakened others. My suggestion was, clean out your ditch, and let in river water; if on a certain state of the tide a little salinity comes in, all the better. What if too much runs up? Then construct a sluice gate. A vast improvement followed the experiment. So, putting two and two together, H——'s little broad and Barton's splendid sheet made four; in other words, there was a corresponding result.

Anglers had got to know that Barton bream were well on feed; and their boats dotted the waters in all directions, as cormorants line sea-rocks. They fished in couples and, like greyhounds, gave no tongue. There were fair ladies also casting angles. Isaiah's prophecy seemed not for them: "The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle in the brooks." The only other reference to angling in the Book is in Habbakuk, chap. i., v. 15, where the anglers seem to have had better luck, for "they rejoice and are glad," an evidence, certainly, of the scaly ones being madly on the feed. From all accounts our lady anglers had something attractive about them, like one of ancient days:

She was used to take delight, with her fair hand
To angle in the Nile, where the glad fish,
As if they knew who 'twas sought to deceive them
Contented to be taken !

Ah ! those wiles of lovely woman ! And how apt she is at playing big fish on taut lines.

The wind did not fail us until we reached Stalham Staithe, and jumped ashore at Southgate's yacht place, when, as if we had no more need of its services, it quitted : the run up Stalham Dyke had been a far less laborious one than when *in extremis* I hitched my salvage job to the tow-rope of a tiny motor craft in 1919. By the time we had finished tea some of the anglers' boats returned. I saw part of one catch laid out at Southgate's door, partly spread there for the lucky angler to gloat over, and for the entertainment of any onlooker who might pass by. The angler, who is usually "a bit of a naturalist," hath the latter's instinct to show his prizes to another, that he may also share in his delight. More than a baker's dozen of fine large robust bream lay there with glazen eyes, the largest quite three pounds in weight. The smaller examples, which were not few, had been allowed to go again, to grow bigger against another foray. It seemed a pity that these sturdy, thickbacked fish should not be popular as food ; the ancient poet *Bonsuetus* probably wrote from his own experience :

All fish that standing pools and lakes frequent,
Do ever yield bad juyce and nourishment.

But here lay a spread that had made a Leeds Jew tailor's heart congratulate his stomach, had they been his own catch or property.

More than a hundred years ago a writer asserted that "He is a bony fish," and that "there is more time thrown away in angling for this fish than I think he is worth." Blakey sums him as being "very much like a pair of bellows in shape, and much the same in flavour." I cannot imagine what he would have said to the Fritton bream-flats, of the silver species, whose stomachs and intestines abound with sturdy tape-worms, a span each in length and a full half inch broad. They have their uses, for the Italians esteem them a sort of subaqueous macaroni, believing them to be the fat of the fish. *Confido et conquiesco!*

We took a leisurely ramble around proud little Stalham, seeing all the sights in half an hour; the only thing that remains vividly in my recollection of it was a heap of worn rush horse-collars, the accumulation certainly of a century, in a palisaded patch in the main street. I missed my old late friend Alma Nichol, who had joined the Great Majority. His geniality has not passed on to his piscatorial descendant, quiet Bob Green, who to-day acts as guide, factotum, and friend, to anglers who are fortunate in employing him. He is an excellent henchman, and that is saying sufficient.

Next morning I crossed over to Burton's Granary and copied an inscription pencilled on a showcard, commemorating the demise of a numerous shoal of fishes, which read:

"July 15, 1922, to August 4th. Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Beech. Total catch: 3 cwt. 3 stone 4½ lb. Bream, rudd, perch, including 19 tench, mostly averaging 2 lb.—Bran and wheat supplied by Burton at the Staithe."

Tench appear to have been unusually venturesome this season, and many of them have regretted it. Two or three among a catch of mixed fishes have not been uncommon. Last evening I had bearded Southgate in his den—his yacht-stores shed. He sat in glory up a corner, with a bench-end covered with household "tuttrements," getting his tea. His chief *morceau* was a succulent tench; which fish, taken from open clear waters and running streams, is highly esteemed by the waterside folk of Norfolk. Some fine tench take mutton fat baits.

There is something of absorbing interest to me in the medley and riot of a boat-builder's shed. The piecing together of a boat, the cutting of strakes to follow the lines of her rake and build, the clinching of rib and strake together, the very smell of the smooth planed wood and the shavings; the surmises of that boat's adventures to be, the folks that shall man her, and the manner of her ending—all these sights and conjectures and fancies have a thrill for one who may let his imagination run riot.

Southgate, being in the height of his letting season, had only time to gossip in snatches. Friday night was a sort of wind-up period to the incoming pleasure craft. In the day one would come to have a quant re-toed; a new rope to splice; a lost rowlock to replace; a nail to knock in here, and a little job there; lamps and stores to see to; and a hundred other jobs incidental to the yachting industry. The shed was littered with tools, with stores, with empty boxes, with things new and old, from mops to fiddles, from trucks to scuppets, from ballast to bed linen.

We laughed, but were lenient over the vagaries

of amateur yachtsmen ; one had been frightened over a refractory Primus stove, but it was discovered that he had placed the spreader cap on bottom upwards ; another could not make out why the lamp worked awkwardly, and it leaked out that the body of it had been filled with methylated spirit (!). One smart sailor, sitting with the tiller in hand, asked where was the rudder. "Well is it," he summed up, "that the yachts know their work, and if they didn't interfere with them, they'd pull through on their own !" . . .

At ten o'clock we were off again, making for Barton Broad, with a fair wind, passing anglers again at work among the fishes ; noted the peculiarity here, as in some other streams, that the reed-maces monopolize one side, and reeds the other, seldom growing together in company. The banks are now shorn of their rank herbage, and the glory of the wild flowers is waning. Called on Cox, the pike fisher, at his obscure staithe ; his young hopeful was nailing burst eel-trunks together ; the good man was at the head of his dinner-table. We talked of eels, and he described the riot they made at "rouding" time, when the scaled fish were spawning. He thought that any restrictions on eel-catching would lead to lean years for anglers. They even would devour the fry that survived their onslaughts on the ova. In a corner was a kennel where his dog resided ; he had been trained to watch for night-moving craft and to bark his warnings in defence of the eel-sets. He thought certainly that many small but sizable eels came up from the sea, and he had reversed his nets on occasion to catch them. . .

Here and there, upon poles stuck in the banks, hung tarry eel-nets a-drying, for the eelmen were preparing for the seaward movement of the eels. But we never came across an eel-babber. Fifty years ago, these now practically extinct professional catchers dotted the riverways at sunset, in their low open punts, and freely besprinkled Breydon. They spent their days in selling or sending off their catches, and "wriggling," or digging, for earth-worms; other small waterside jobs, and idling at their favourite pubs, beguiled their leisure hours. At dead o' midnight you might have drifted by unknown to them, locating them by the glow of their pipes, and the occasional thud of the lead upon the punt floor, when large eels, more entangled than is usual, with their teeth in the bab-threads, found themselves difficult of release. More than a single reason might be given for their vanishing; and it had become "more'an a starvation livin'." Past generations of eelmen are forgotten, and the present one—their descendants—have mostly sought other occupations.

"Old Ben" of the wherry "Albion" loved eel stew; Charley Higham was loath to sell him, still more so to give him a pound or two of eels for his supper.

"Got a pound or two o' small eels?" he asked, as he sailed by.

"Only a few little titty totty ones—not a pound!" was Charles' usual reply.

One day Ben was passing again, and the stereotyped reply was vouchsafed to him.

"Well, I'm glad on't," said Old Ben, "for my owd wherry now run'd into yer trunk and busted it."

"Oh, my Gawd!" groaned Charles; "and ther wor eight stone o' big eels in ther!" . . .

The wind in an excellent good humour wafted us through the lower reaches of the Ant, scarce flurrying the waters, but making the pads and pods of the ripening yellow water lilies dance at the river margins, and nod to us in passing. And so we turned into the broader Bure, presently to bring the "Walrus" to an anchor a short way up the charming Ranworth Dyke, at a pretty nook, where the alders came near to the water's edge to greet us. We had plenty of elbow room, although a yacht and my friend Burton's house-boat were in sight and within hail, until the twilight came along, and then the night, to blot them out, and blanket us in oblivion.



LAPWINGS

CHAPTER IX

BY HORNING TOWN

It requires some rudeness to disturb with our boat the mirror-like surface of the water, in which every twig and blade of grass was so faithfully reflected. . . . On the other hand . . . it does hold well the earth together. It [Horning] gets laughed at because it is a small town, I know, but nevertheless it is a place where great men may be born any day, for fair winds and foul blow right over it without distinction.

—THOREAU.

CARLISLE (U.S.A.) was in the philosopher's mind when he made this lucky shot, which might equally well have been aimed at Horning. In his "week" on the "Concord" he went through Carlisle on the Sunday, too, and scribbled sixty-two pages as the day's output. The log of the "Walrus" shows a vastly briefer entry. . . .

We had scarce moored at Ranworth ere a lady in a motor-boat drew up and sought our custom. *O tempora! O mores!* it was a travelling confectionary stores: if Mahomet cannot go to the mountain, the mountain must come to him! It was a sort of glorified bumboat, that took one back to Nelson's time, when Yarmouth "bummers" hurried out to the fleets at anchor in the roadstead freighted with bread, and green and other groceries. Our floating shop was laden with pastries, cakes,

and luxuries that were scarcely befitting provender for two hungry voyagers, to whom a wholemeal loaf and other substantialities would have been more inviting. Two shillings for a currant cake! Why, a barrow-load of cabbages, and a bag of potatoes, would have been easier to barter for a florin. But all who go a-broading—even if an-hungered, are neither monks nor ascetics; whilst the youthful may be fanciful.

It had been a great day with broad-proud Ranworth folk, and those who dwelt in the villages around. Showy placards had been pasted in conspicuous places, where even passing boaters could row and read them. There had been high jinks ashore on Thursday—pastoral plays, an organ recital, teas, and amusements. The village parson, who had provided entertainment for his parishioners, was winding up the good cheer with a gymkhana; and as my skipper and I had escaped all the other water frolics on the rivers, more by design than good luck, we would show ourselves friendly, for the village incumbent, like Goldsmith's parson, who enters into the simple pleasures of his parishioners, as well as sharing their poignant sorrows, is always my friend.

Gymkhana began at eight; a record crowd hid the green slope to the water's edge, and every one was on tiptoe to be pleased. The aquatic sports, naturally, were in highest favour; and there was no lack of sturdy lads and lasses as competitors. Dinghy races, with varying "stunts," were distinguished more by displays of muscle than of science; whilst mishap and mistake were enjoyed even more than correct performance. The Ranworth grebes

and moorhens must have wondered at the noisy hilarity and gone into hiding.

As the night darkened down, yachts and boats beamed and glinted with lamp and lantern; and the concerters' raft, with its constellation of beauty and talent, became the centre of attraction; when music and song, floating sweetly over the waters, thrilled the gay throng afloat and ashore, intensifying the loveliness and the romance of a perfect Broadland night.

At the "Maltsters' Arms" the more rugged masculine element forgathered, to make merry in their own particular way. Then it was time to disperse; and we four rowed by my friend in his dinghy, respectively paddled back to our separate ships. Thoreau might have been with us in spirit. Read his words: "Gradually the village murmur subsided, and we seemed to be embarked on the placid current of our dreams, floating from past to future as silently as one awakes to fresh morning or evening thoughts." . . .

My skipper was greatly off colour on Saturday morning, so we idled a part of the day, losing a wind we could ill spare: it was as if luck delighted in fickleness. And while I acted as male nurse, a good Samaritan, from Norwich, came into the dyke with his big brass-funnelled yacht, and recognizing me, hung to for a pleasant chat. I explained my idleness, and my skipper's case: like a good physician he thought "Old Parr" had a panacea for all indispositions, and forthwith handed over the side a fat-bodied, cloisterish-looking bottle, a stiff dose from which acted like magic upon my invalid—faith-healing, perhaps, had a finger in

it (!)—and before eventide we were under weigh again, hoping to tide up to Horning Ferry, our sail being too indolent even to tap its slack sides with its reefing-points. We were not the only idlers, for those boats drifted that were ahead of us, and those astern were equally lazy and lifeless: it was a case of painted ships upon a painted ocean. So we just sat still and lolled in luxurious reposefulness. Quanting without a deckway was out of the question, but why worry on a holiday trip?

The only folk who got any excitement at all forced it out of petrol: from one such passing brat came a small boy's voice:

"Oh, mother!" said he, "just look! that's a real catamaran!" What next were we to be mistaken for? At length we boat-hooked the Ferry quayside, made fast, and Vanderdecken and crew, ashore at last, stalked into the desired haven. The landlord was busy outside chatting with a motorist, so we were left a bit to ourselves; presently he came in, turning upon us a look of query as if asking, "What cheer?" I thought he came fairly well up to a certain travelling author's standard, who asserts that "his crib furnishes provender for the traveller's horse, and [whose] larder provisions for his appetite . . . he knows what a man wants"; so this appeared, as a regular customer, judging by his physiognomy, sauntered in and took a certain corner as his favourite pew, when it needed but a lifted hand for a full foaming mug to come into it. I went, myself, more out of curiosity to see a typical broadland tavern, than need of refreshment, but ordered a lemonade as a sort of palliate and a gloze for my inquisitiveness. The acclimatized

native evidently summed me up as hopeless, and not sufficiently cordial to chum up to ; and he himself looked of so fruity, and of so goodly a vintage, that a bottle of my own beverage would have been wasted hopelessly on him.

I was immensely tickled by a sort of secret recess that suggested a doctor's surgery rather than what it actually proved to be,—an equivalent to the pot and tankard department, where bottles and barrels were also hidden ; and herein as in a surgery Dr. Boniface mixed his mysterious potions, and drew his liquid secrets from their covert. His medicines were not handed over a counter, but delivered by hand or by tray, to standing or sitting recipients. This air of mystery seems quite a commonplace in Broadland taverns. The evergreen dart-board, so frequently seen in inn-parlours in country places, had its place upon the wall, and was evidently a well-used toy when idlers met ; and men whose forefathers drew yew-bow, and sped reeded arrow against our enemies are quite content to try their skill on humbler target. Its bull's eye had been often pierced, and the outer circles had punctures not a few : and what ill-thrown darts went wide hit wall or door. The farthest flung had sped when smoke was thickest and men's eyes were waxing hazy. . . .

The wonderful newness of Horning front impressed us as we drifted by cosy bungalow and monster garages, busy boat-sheds, and gaudy inn ; the one small street of other days hiding itself in humble retirement behind modernity. Where once the eelman and the wherryman lived in obscurity, yachtsmen and speculator, caterer and holiday

maker now predominate ; and given some tangible little industry, I do not see why Horning village should not some day become Horning township, with a gold-chained mayor and all his gorgeous functionaries, who shall lead the place to a vaster importance and popularity.

The "Walrus" loafed up Horning stream, but finding the tide unhelpful, and a friendly breeze quite out of the question, we put her about, and drifted and paddled to a cutting that we had prospected on the way up ; and having moored for the night, went for a mouch round Horning streets, visiting the post office, the grocery store, and the butcher, who had, however, sold clean out to the last half ounce of mutton suet, and put his shutters up. We peered into another riverside hotel, finding the bar-room crowded with clamorous youths, who talked wherry and yacht and fishing-boat to others who strove to outshine them, and all in a reek of tobacco smoke that would have eclipsed the densest mist that ever rolled at eventide along a Broadland river.

On Sunday morning, after breakfast, with my best necktie neatly knotted, I slipped into the dinghy "Florrie" and rowed to friend Oetzmann's—the designer and maker of Horning's glory—and passed a pleasant hour. At eleven we were afloat again upon the Bure, drifting Salhouse-wards, with designs upon fashionable Wroxham. With what scanty wind we could muster in the little sail, we threaded a way through a mazy fleet of yachts and sailing boats, finding them thickest at "Swan Inn" corner. The panorama of yachts and house-boats lining the river banks made a famous show :

every one appeared filled or smothered with feminine beauty, that radiated in the sunlight of manly adoration,—a silky, flannelled, smiling, idling crowd that Wroxham, the exclusive, the fashionable, the “keep-off-my-lawn,” and “leave-me-radiant,” could not surpass.

But Wroxham was not for us to-day, nor was I greatly disappointed, for Wroxham, for all its beauty, oppresses me; its urban rusticity, its overwhelming grandiosity, and interminable mileage of wind-baffling trees, does not move one who finds inspiration, and seldom wants for a breeze, among mud-flats. Yet no Broadland voyager should miss Wroxham, Queen of the beautiful Norfolk lowlands. And to the lover of the wild, one visit is sufficient for a lifetime.

My skipper, in his rôle of Captain Kettle, was fractious, annoyed, and mortified at the perversity of the elements; and when a mile or so beyond Horning the tide had eased, and the wind remained hopelessly irrational, his remarks were not for Sunday spelling: yet his displeasure was cheering after his yesterday's apathy: I found him better to be himself again. I argued the small area of our lugsail, the portliness of our hull, the obstructiveness of the miles of alders, that guarded the approaches to Wroxham from the breezes of heaven. My reasoning softened him, and he at length became as docile as the irascible little despot of Wharfedale Particular Methodists, when coming in sight of his chapel, with his accordion under his arm and his hymn book in his pocket.

So we tided and paddled back on the lazy ebb to Horning again, and past cud-chewing cattle upon the banks, and where Sunday idling horses lifted their heads to look at us. We were becoming reconciled, almost, to the chronic perverseness of the August weather of 1922, with its skies so often painted drab, its not unpleasant coolness, its dearth of sunshine—and—its frequent breathlessness. But the open country saw us moving by with a sufficient breeze to make our cutwater cleave the surface, to trail behind us two long bubbleless ripples that widened in the distance to a respectable wake; and ere long Horning church, perched high on the hill, that had become an almost tiresome landmark, disappeared eventually among the trees: a lonely edifice, around which, in years gone by, a thatched hamlet had probably clustered, until the rustics found it to be more profitable to dwell nearer the waterside, where fluviate pursuits were not so monotonous, nor so exacting, as vegetating upon the land.

And so, taking advantage of every slant of wind, and helped occasionally by the oars astern, we at length sighted Acle, where we lashed our idling steed to the yachtsmen's bank, and snugged down for the night: and soon there came on our first real marsh mist, the densest sample that I ever saw upon our rivers, which was so thick that even our burgee was lost sight off, and the bow of our vessel could scarcely be distinguished. The red glimmer of my storm lantern was hardly so glaring as a glow-worm's torch.

The sound of music and singing drifted from a yacht below us, on the tide; and merriment, that appeared a little too unrestrained for the quiet of a Sabbath night, had a rather grating, discordant, soul-jarring effect upon one to whom the soft ripple of waters, and peacefulness, are concord and rapture sufficient.

The anchored yachts had given the various skippers the chance for an evening's gossip at the riverside inn; my skipper for "experience," more than from habit, and eager to listen to waterway yarns, had also drifted thither,—to come back in the thick fog along as dangerous a path as could well be imagined; and but for my fetching him with the lantern, I doubt if it had been safe for him to return. The old hands knew the crinks and turns by instinct.

Broadland skippers are to-day a sober generation; and those who shall hereafter write Broadland books will have scant copy over vagaries that characterized the old school, a member of which my friend A. H. Smith has so well described:

"Noah [the skipper] was questioned regarding the allowance of beer per day, and he at once became attentive and informing.

"'I ain't a teetotaller,' he said, 'but I knows when I ha' had enough, and I allers say that if a man wants more 'an eight pints o' beer a day he orter buy it hisself!'

"'Eight pints a day!' I gasped. 'Preposterous!'

"'Quite right,' said Noah; 'taint enough for a

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strong man's constitution ; but I don't ax yer fer more. Some men never feel so well as when they've a couple o' gallons aboard ; but I can't drink like an ordinary wherryman ! ' ' "



GOSHAWK

CHAPTER X

SOME BURE-SIDE FOLK-LORE

But a countryman shall be master of my revels. He who knows the most, he who knows what sweets and virtues are in the ground, the waters, the plants, the heavens, and how to come at these enchantments, is the rich and royal man. . . . Nature is loved by what is best in us.

—R. W. EMERSON.

MONDAY morning, as I had expected, after last night's heavy mist, broke warm and radiantly sunny. After an early meal I slung my glasses, and stick in hand sauntered to Acle village, thence on to Upton, through cornfields and root crops, where a bridle-path creased its way, the bending oats wiping their fat, wet ears on my coat sleeves, after their mist-bath; passing Hodge, and his hairy hocked horses by a bank-side, enjoying their breakfasts, hard by the sentinel-like Church of St. Margarets, in the fields. My two-mile walk was quite sufficient for the oppressively warm air of the morning, with its flies a-following with a persistence worthy of a more profitable occupation.

The village was scarce astir; harvesting had not yet come in, to speak of, for the lack of sunny ripening days. I found up my old friend and distant relative, "Darkey," a village celebrity, at his toilet, busily reaping—where he had not sown—the stubbles on

his fertile chin. I had come to exchange greetings, and incidentally with a view of discussing local folk-lore, for Upton, I think, is the most conservative village respecting the superstitious and the supernatural that I am acquainted with in Norfolk. Scarcely knowing where to begin, I mentioned cuckoos.

"Bor," he said, "cuckoos are unlucky bahds."

"Think so?" I innocently asked.

"They are," he continued; "it's thought wery unlucky for one to fly over the house—a sign of a dearth, they say." (He was not yet committing himself.) "I know'd tree [three] old ladies what was over eighty, as lived all together. A cuckoo kept comin' a-worriten', in their pear-tree, so I took note on it; and, sure enough, afore the year wor out, one on 'em died. Now, I know'd *thet* for a fact!"

I could not see that it would have been anything phenomenal if they had all "gone west," but he would not be "argified against it, and what wor true." His dialectics were broad, but interesting.

"Sum folks as was careful, if they set a row of taters, missed one drill, and then got rid of it: if no one know'd what becum of it, well and good; otherwise sumboddy died. If a bumble-bee cum in the house theer'd be sure to come a stranger. He'd had one alriddy that mornin'." (And I had turned up!).

"Pigs could see the wind, and cried it; cats set their tails up against it. Oh, about bees: if a bee-owner died you must put crape on theer hives, otherwise they'd all fret and die; and if you sold a hive, and took gold or wheat in exchange, they'd die too. If a person had warts on his hand, count

them, and tell the charmer, and in a week they'd all be gone. So they would if you stole a piece of butcher's suet and rubbed it on, prowidin' the butcher didn't know. If a man got stung by a wiper, he must catch that wery wiper, and try the oil out; and use it; *thet* would cure the sting. People's heads itch afore wind, and your scalp creeps, at sea, against it."

Like many East Coast country folk he had been to sea in a fishing lugger, and "done" the herring voyage. "He'd seen rum things at sea," he said, when referring to weather wisdom, and folks' beliefs. "He'd seen wil' ducks (guillemots) thirty mile out, with young ones onder their wings; they believed they hatched 'em at sea. When gulls light on pellets (net floats) or a bit o' wreck, *thet* meant a gale o' wind. Tom Taylors (storm petrels) we didn't like at all: they portended wind; some people think they live on the sea bottom. If you see composants (*Corpo santo*, Sp.) on the mast truck, like a ball o' fire, *thet* meant snow."

The village folk were great believers in herbs—herb teas, lotions, and potions, herbs that would cure every ill, if you knew the right ones (!). Hemp-agrimony, yarrow, shepherd's purse, broom, dandelions, horehound—all had their curative virtues; "an' if a hoss fall off his feed, tansy would rite-side him."

I tried to keep him to natural objects of the seas.

"Well," he said, "we did see rum things around the luggers. Theer wus blow-fishes (small whales) and scoulters (dolphins) what tormented the herrin' nets, rendin' them in their teeth. We got bottle-noses (porbeagle sharks) in the nets, what rolled

up in 'em with theer mouths full of torn 'lint,' and cut 'em away, and hull'd them in again. They worn't no use, only to bile down for ile. He know'd one old bottle-nose, what they recognized, that went from boat to boat tryin' his luck; and them blow-fish reg'lar skimmed the water for herrin's.

"He'd seen birds flyin' across the North Sea, certainly; he'd seen larks and linnets leave Holland and fetch and land at Winterton. Had had 'herrin-spinks' (gold-crested wrens) pick at the scales on the nets, poor things, and draw into blocks anywheer to sleep, bein' so done up; French sparrows too (bramblings?) in fogs, and reg'lar fights with starlin's and others in the riggin' for places to rest on. Little birds fell in the sea, reg'lar done up, and gulls got 'em."

Much more interesting information was vouchsafed to me that to narrate in detail would become irksome; and our walk back together by a marsh path winding between ditches, the crumbly soil of which had been delved up to form it, still found "Darkey" holding forth. The pathway was beset with clinging brambles, giant yarrows, and gaunt marsh thistles, over which danced peacock and tortoiseshell butterflies and gay insects of various species. The moistness of the way and the heat of the sun made the scramble through clinging weeds a wearying process, made the less trying, perhaps, by my companion's knowledge of marsh flowers, and their many "virtues." And when we arrived at the "Walrus" he sat upon the bank and still expounded the wisdom of the Norfolk ancients. . . .

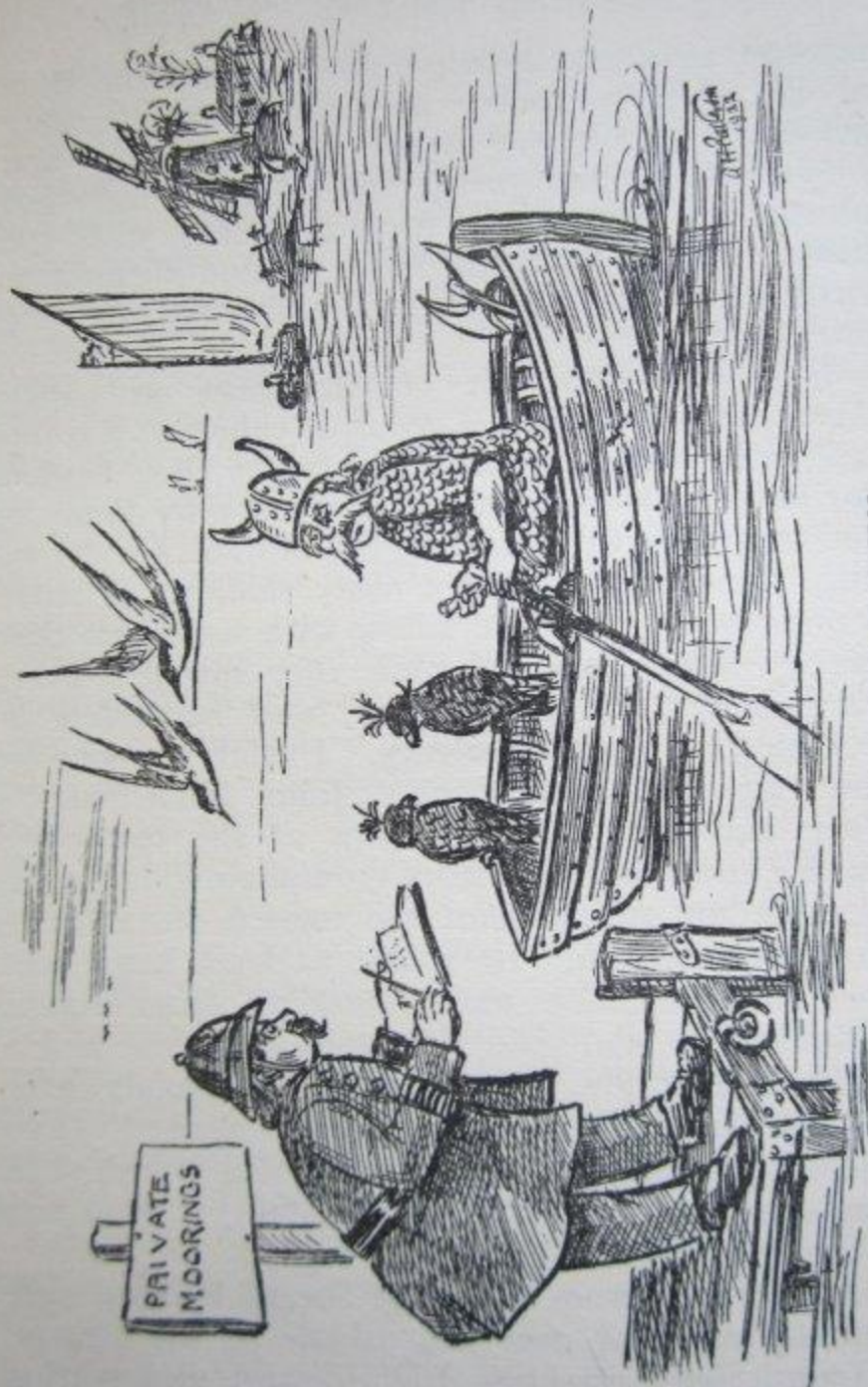
At noon we set sail again, and proceeded slowly downstream, having shot Acle Bridge by oar, upon the ebb, picking up a bit of wind here and there, but, as usual, finding very little, so we had to grin and bear it. The Acle New Road ran almost parallel to the river, and with its windmills dotting the landscape at every point of the compass recalled the pictures we had seen of Holland, the long lines of low willows, the lanes of ditches adding vastly to the similarity. We got ashore at "Stracey Arms," to watch the rescue of a large and valuable motor-car—by crane and crank—that had run into a deep ditch in last night's blinding mist. What mattered what beguiled us, since Ventosus had gone to sleep and our little red burgee hung limp as a broken twig? Captain Kettle thought otherwise, and watched the sail as a spider ogles its web. For miles but one yacht had passed us, and she, with her huge spread of sailcloth, ran aground, to pick us up again a mile or so downstream. But her troubles did not minimize ours, nor the fact that probably many other crafts lay idling still for want of a breeze; lost days were as nothing to them, for want of a set programme, one bit of Broadland being as interesting to them as another; besides, with main- and top- and jibsail they could move along while our bit of a tablecloth was still thinking it over.

At Mautby deep waters cease to lave the river walls, considerable ronds lying between them and the river, whilst tenacious mud-patches stretch out below the shallows and make progress a ticklish process. I suggested we should throw a tow-rope ashore and lower the sail and mast on the crutches,

and take turns at towing; so making a loop, I sprung out on a rond and put on the harness, the skipper sitting aft, tiller in hand, with an oar lying handy against grounding. The "Walrus" pricked her ears, so to speak, and meekly followed, now and then, with all our contriving, bumping her keel and billage on little hummocks of broken rondage, but glancing off with a bit of humouring. The tramp along the velvety grasses was not unpleasant after long sitting; the strain was not great, having the tide under her; indeed, I enjoyed it, for this ancient exercise in me conduces to a pleasant abandon, wherein one's memory riots in old-time doings, when, in early mornings, I rambled here around after plover and duck, or threshed the river for bream and roach. Moonlit evenings come back to mind, when walking gunners picked each other up, and talked hares and mallards and lapwings; not to mention strange old fellows whose exploits, illegal and otherwise, made for merriment and laughter. Most of these old comrades-in-arms have passed over the Great Divide, and their like will never be met with again.

But my reverie was occasionally broken by a jump across an oozy rond-gap, or a run round another, too wide to risk it, and a clamber over an occasional marsh stile—these kept one alert ashore, and also demanded the vigilance of the man afloat, who had to drop the tiller now and then to take the oar and push the craft a little astern and out, and lash with his tongue whatever cause he thought most deserving of blame.

Now, I am moderately content with the condition of the lower Bure, and, knowing these provoking



THE LANDING OF LODBROG

reaches, as a rule escape calamity; but the state of the river is to-day an abomination, causing amateur yachtsmen much heart-burning, and frequently placing young fellows in an awkward scrape, as when, say, speeding home with the yacht, due at a certain date, to find themselves stranded in lonely places and their purses at very low ebb.

This—our—little bit of experience as galley slaves seemed to tickle a group of yokels at Mautby mill, who were busy on a haystack; they bawled flat jokes, which lost half their meaning by distance, and they kept up a running fire of banter while we were struggling to clear a nasty shallow. I eased a moment to rend one fellow with a remark that exactly fitted him, and while they sorted it over, very slowly, we tried again, and succeeded in getting clear again, in silence. I think someone on the hay had recognized "John Knowlitt"! Then came my skipper's turn at the tow-rope; and he, too, had incidents of grounding upon shoals, blaming me rather than the unseen obstacles in the turgid waters. He might at least have kept silence rather than make startling observations. Only a Job, who paid river-tolls, and had had a dose of Bureside towage, could reasonably have asked, "Is there iniquity in my tongue?" And again, "If I justify myself mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse."

A half mile from the First Steam Mill we were actually aground near the middle of the stream. I found there was fun in it, only I was getting terribly hungry! My kindest wish was that the

Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club's Committee-boat shall, some fine day, with all its leading lights aboard, ground at the last-named spot, on a falling tide, with night approaching; and may I be there to see, to make appropriate comment!

We had the worst yet to come—from that smelly horse Slaughter-house corner to the Destructor—a cheerless locality at low water, in the gloaming, with far-reaching muds freely besprinkled with flints, and bricks, and lumps of concrete, and here and there a half-submerged and unwanted dog, kindly hidden from at least one's view in a sack. We had to add an extra length of rope, and even then my towman walked almost parallel to the creeping ship. . . .

There is one man on our rivers who seems never in a hobble, and never anything else, when I have met him, but merry. Bob Tooley is known to every river-goer, and his spurts of Broad Norfolk, and the pert way he carries his plumpness, are equally worthy of note. He handles a quant three times longer than himself as neatly poised as a trout fisher his favourite rod. Its toe goes with a snap into the mud, and its head finds its niche in his strong shoulder; and forthwith Bob starts his goose-step along the wherry's plankway, never himself gaining an inch of way, although the craft goes forward under his soldier-like tread. Scented soap is one of Bob's weaknesses.

Said Bob one day, when passing us, "Yow're gettin' on!" and then went on to tell us of a horse that was obstinate.

"It's like this 'ere," he said: "we got a order to shift a hoss, so we took the wherry beyond

Stokesby way, and laid to. We was to put him athort the river, to save a fourteen-mile round. Well, we got a halter on him, and three or four on us got him along till, by a lot of contrivin', we got one fut on the forepeak. Then the warmin' wouldn't budge a inch. Langwidge worn't no use, nor fair words, and the more we worrited, the wuss he was. So we considered a bit, and then says I, 'Give us the winch-rope,' and I puts a hank or so round his neck, and knotted it. 'Now,' I says, 'You —— *gentleman, yow'll ha' ter go!*' So I says to the chaps, 'Jist you buck him up, and I'll crank!' And we cranked him on the forepeak, and done the job for him! The —— [some word] *hed to cum."* . . . Merry old Tooley!

I suggested to my skipper that Tooley's winch, with tow-rope enough, would have been just the thing, from Stokesby Ferry to Yarmouth Yachting Station, to have met our case.

At very long last, in the dim light of a flickering quayside lamp, we moored to the decaying piles a few paces northward of the first of the three Bure bridges, fumbling with ropes to fix on any spike-head that offered at least a tolerably safe anchorage, and hanging fenders to keep the ship's planks and coamings off the rusted, naked boltheads that careless pile-drivers ought to have buried in the fibres of the wood. The skipper preferred to remain aboard, in this smelly region known as Yarmouth Yacht Station, the inky sewage water trailing from an outlet above us bedaubing our water-line as it trickled with the stream, to make a more definite ruling on the swan-like hulls below us, moored at the station proper.

I managed to get a grip on a jagged pile, and putting my foot on the cabin top jumped ashore, not ill pleased with our slug-like progress of the day, honestly an-hungered, and quite resigned to this year's weather-vagaries; determined to pray no more for favourable breezes, as doing so seemed to be a waste of choice English, and a-flying in the face of Providence. I was happy enough, so why repine? It is a long, long waterway that has no bending, or that patience and persistency will not round in the end.



A PIONEER HOUSEBOAT.

CHAPTER XI

BACK ACROSS BREYDON

But I go with a friend to the shore of our little river, and with one stroke of the paddle I leave the village politics and personalities, yes, and pass into a delicate realm of sunset and moonlight, too bright for any spotted man to enter without novitiate and probation.

—R. W. EMERSON.

AH! how many times have I eluded the turmoils of town life by slipping into my old punt, "Yarwhelp," as she ran down the rollered slipway into the waters of Breydon, leaving behind me what makes for care and worry and unrest of body and mind, to feel as free as the gulls that glided above-head—"ministering angels" in their joyous way; sometimes at dawn of day when the sun, peering above the reddening housetops, touched with silver the ripples upon the tideway, or when his great crimson orb flung a long, broad wake of blazing gold athwart the moist bosom of Breydon flats, when gaunt herons suspend their eel-fishing to scratch their wise old heads, as if in wonder at the beauty and the gorgeousness of it all. In misty silence, or under the twinkling stars, or when crouching before a storm-blast, or drifting in the quiet moonlight, the charm, the enchantment of the old estuary has held me an awed and willing captive. . . .

Tuesday found us early astir ; and having laid in fresh stores, and refilled the water-bottle, we hitched our tow-rope to a friendly motor-boat, already harnessed to a couple of yachts, whose defiance of the upcoming tide would not have been helped in anyway by a favouring breeze ; so, laying gunwale to gunwale, each skipper at his own tiller, we sped under the three bridges, scarce noting the shrimp boats and the raffle of small craft that crowded each quayside, and so round the Knowle and its dolphins, through the Breydon viaduct, thence to the open channel. By the time we had come abreast of the "Boarded Bars," at the mile-point, each craft had opened its pinions (in our case but a single one) and was prepared to show its individual capabilities. The first well away was a sea-goer, captained by a keen old Lowestoft yachtsman ; she was well on for the Narrows, near Burgh, when number two, a sloop rigger, manned by amateurs, had only got abreast of the Cross stake ; whilst the cumbersome "Walrus" had so far made but a score of Channel stakes. Like ourselves, she craved a robuster breeze.

But this easy-going pace suited me well, for it gave me opportunities to watch the sea-fowl winging their several ways, a-picking up their floating breakfasts, as when Drayton probably saw them here :

*The Sea-mew, Sea-pye, Gull and Curlew here do keep,
As searching every shoal, and watching every deep.
To find the floating fry, with their sharp piercing sight,
Which suddenly they take, by stooping from the height.*

I had fine opportunities for watching the autumnal gathering, and the rollicking of the gulls, already

drifting in from their housekeeping resort at Scoulton Mere, with their nuptial brown hoods still upon their little wise heads, and bringing with them their mottled grey young—those that survived the dangers of babyhood, when hungry eels and pikes and ravening rats lay hold of the downy swimmers in front of their very cradles. Common terns and lesser terns, forsaking the shingle patches of Wells and Blakeney, darted hither and thither, throwing themselves impetuously upon the brown salt tide, to rise a-wing again with a silvery mite of a herring held fast between their mandibles, that was hurried away with to some bare mud patch, where always hungry, impatient youngsters waited for their food, and clamoured for it lustily as their parents hove in sight. Odd was it to observe a mother bird pass one, and two, and sometimes number three, to drop the little fish into the open bill of number four, the others having already had their share in proper rotation; and strange as it appeared, the first fed did not insist when they saw the mother bird pass them by, as if the actions of their dam had been correctly understood.

It is most entertaining to watch the lesser terns, with heads bent down and inwards, the lower mandible touching the breast, watching the—to the human eye—invisible, greenbacked herring-syle, fluttering, dipping, rising a few feet, as a tiny fish comes into view, and then descending again, keeping the birds constantly lifting and falling, never striking the water unless they feel sure their chances have not been misjudged. Never do you see terns, like gulls, sitting on the water—their resting- or alighting-place must be solid—a balk, a basket, a

floating box, or at the worst a moderately dry mud-flat. I have seen a hollow square of terns asleep, or preening their feathers, upon a dirty straw paliasse thrown overboard by some shiftless housekeeper. Exquisite little fellows they are, these "chit-pearls" of North Norfolk, an expressive phrase, conveying ideas of note and colour.

Rare birds drop in unexpectedly. In April, 1901, I sailed in my punt past seventeen handsome spoonbills upon the flats; and in June, 1905, no less than nine dainty avocets *swimming* on the undulating waters, a raree show, indeed! . . .

To-day there pass us no wherries a-sailing; only now and then an iron barge, with a steamer hull a-towing it. Time was when, on every ebb and flow graceful sailing wherries were moving up or down. A pleasure wherry, indeed, passed us, but looked too smart and garish to be romantic, or in keeping. There seemed a great still loneliness, made the more intense by the fewness of the craft, than if there had not passed us a solitary one. Fifty years ago, a hardy race of smelters, wildfowlers and eelmen wrested a living out of Breydon waters and from its oozes; their prey was eels and mullet, flounders and mallard, pochard and godwit, and richer and rarer birds, ere the close seasons killed one-half of their livelihood; when collectors outvied each other in purchasing rare and desirable birds, and when a race of "gentlemen" gunners hired them as pilots and henchmen. Nature, perverted by man, turned swamps into grazing grounds, and oozes into circumscribed, well-drained cornlands, up and down the valleys of the Broadland rivers; and Breydon, the heart of the bird-country, piled up soft mud-

flats into hard soil, whereon the tides spread yearly in lessening inches. But these changes are herein too intricate and lengthy to discuss, and my reader must refer to my "Wild Life on a Norfolk Estuary," if he would pursue the subject. For over a century these changes have been more and more swiftly moving and marked.

The last stake (No. 56) hath come in sight, and we are well over the Narrows, where the waters always appear to be more or less ruffled. "On our right is Berney Arms," so said a voice whose owner I recognized as a sort of guide, upon a crowded pleasure steamer that passed us, adding plaintively, "Which, once a public-house, is so no longer!" It is needless to say that many eyes were turned to it in apparent sadness. It is a drear spot, and he was glad of some outstanding object to stir the imagination of the passengers.

"Yon's St. Nicholas Church!" once said a loquacious Yarmouth brake-man, "on our right [no response]; on our left is Lacon's Brewery!" [loud cheers, and much laughter].

The squat old "Arms" could tell strange stories had it a tongue. Watermen and fowlers, fishermen and poachers freely used it in the far-away days, when stress of weather, or other circumstances brought or stranded them hereabouts; on racing days and water frolics, when the one barrel of the usual week had brought up by wherry its reinforcements. Prosing toppers and casual visitors sat in fine evenings on the bit of green in front, some mending their nets, others resting on the benches, with their guns beside them. Pot and patter—true stories and otherwise of past adventures, and



IN DAYS OF YORE

unprofitable arguments, as well as packs of playing cards filled in the leisurely hour. The policemen from a neighbouring village came for company now and then, with ears that itched for "clues," being no respecters of persons.

A certain pair of adventurous poachers sat at their favourite tippie one Boxing Day afternoon. They had wandered over the marshes after lapwings, and such snipe as could be openly shot; hoping for "any old hares" that might be spending their holidays upon the frosted lowlands. Two village constables sat near the fire, shuffling cards with a trio of smelters. A hirsute native appeared in the doorway, and seeing the sportsmen stalked in, and had a "treat" at their expense.

"Thar's nine owd cutes [coots] dropt in at the back o' the owd reed-patch! Yow'll get a shot if yow hurry up!" said he, in full hearing of the limbs of the law, who sat hard, ignoring such paltry game. The two poaching gentlemen quietly took their departure and their guns, remarking that "if they bagged 'em they'd bring in a couple for each of the slops." They did not return; but when asked a while after as to their luck, one of them replied:

"Cutes! no, bor, more like *petridges*—nine of 'em; but as we didn't fare partickler thirsty, we left the bobbies to their own entertainment; and for owt we keered, they might be theer yet!"

Possibly Berney Arms pub. in the 'seventies was one of the loneliest of "meetin' housen." But for a long time the big room was used on a Sunday for preaching purposes, the "local" parsons being ferried over from Burgh Castle in a dilapidated

smack's boat, providing the weather was not too wild, when a drum-up was made of the five houses comprising the widely scattered hamlet. Two of us youths, one stormy Sunday, walked with old John Bitton, a noted Methodist, to Burgh, and waited for an hour on the salting for two Berneyites to ferry us over. But the wildness affrighted them, and when they had summed up courage at length, big waves broke over the boat. Only two natives attended the service, yet the venerable John went through with it; and the gale so increased, that at nightfall we had to stumble and wade over the sodden marshes, and down the railway line, home, the rain beating in our faces all the way. Ah! what other strange tales could I not write about that wildest corner of East Norfolk. What bags the old race of wildfowlers made of duck and pochard, scaup and tuftie, when snow lay deep on the marshlands, and ice covered Breydon inches deep, like a marble flooring, save where the tide had cracked long black gaps, leading to the main channel, where the icy waters showed, and into which hungry fowl by the hundred crowded; what hauls of smelts and mullets these fishermen-sportsmen made, "well upward"—mulletts! well, they would, on rare occasions nearly fill the boats, leaving many bewildered fishes still in the nets, kept prisoners until they could return again to retrieve them. How one would like to know more and more of these men, now extinct, whose rusted guns long ago vanished on the scrap-heap; and whose nets rotted in the garrets and cellars of their children. What hauls they made, what skeps of wild fowl they boated home; what spicy, wild life, wild adventurous yarns they told!

But to-day they are as lost to us as the Stone-age man, who slew mammoth and pterodactyl, and many a beast of stranger ravening. . . .

There runs an acute angle of ronds and marsh walls at Breydon far-end, against the apex of which the tidal water splits its volume, to send half of its inrush up the Yare, and the other half up the Waveney. At this corner, in tiny groups, when I was a young man, nestled several tarry old house-boats, the waterside lodging-houses of hardy fisher-folk, who but rarely saw their town or village homes. Not one did we see to-day, for these poor fishermen have also fallen on evil days :

Maniscus, mourning for his only son,
The toil-experienced fisher *Pelagon*,
Has placed upon his tomb a net and oar,
The badges of a painful life and poor.

With our incorrigible ill luck, the light wind, which we had hoped would carry us to Reedham, all but fell away with the turning of the tide : a full half mile more and we should have turned into Haddiscoe Canal with an at least favouring easy-going breeze. The skipper did all that was possible by tacking, but losing more way than gaining it, each time went into the wind. He crab-clawed, hauling hand-over-hand on the lank grasses that overhung the broken, abrupt banks ; we rowed, but the quick-flowing ebb, increasing its pace almost perceptibly, baffled us. Then I essayed to jump ashore with a tow-rope, and was making some progress, when down I fell bodily into a large hole that had been hidden by rank grasses and tall reeds, as neatly as into any buck-trap in Zululand,

the crew losing sight of me altogether. Fortunately, there was no broken timber inside it, as in an African pitfall, or I had not clambered out so quickly. Only once before in my many years of water-spanieling, had I gone into a hole, and then but knee-deep; the oddest thing of the present incident was my coming out completely dry! I scratched my head, and thought of the short, but truthful axiom of the Frenchmen, *Bouche serrée mouche n'y entre*, and *kept* my mouth shut, so that none escaped therefrom! This was the worst and only alarming incident of the whole three weeks' trip.

The bit of river from Berney Arms to Reedham is, to my mind, the wildest in Broadland; and but for the traffic of the Yare, would be the loneliest, but the ronds were raggedly beautiful with rank herbage, and smiling Michaelmas daisies—my favourite wild flowers—whereamong droning bees and other insects swarmed and revelled. A picturesque mill and a mellow-red farmhouse once in a while broke the monotony of these miles of wilderness.

Quite a company of common sandpipers tripped about the broken banks, bobbing their tails funnily, as is their wont, as they pecked among the prone water weeds and in crevices of fallen clay, searching for crustaceans as lively as themselves. Overhead, small parties of curlews—once thirty in a flock—dotted the grey skies, and piped cheerily on their migration from the northern moors, the advance guard of many wading birds that later made the misty nights eerie, as they halted above the lamp-glow of city and town, tittering weird cries, which timorous souls deemed ghostlike and uncanny, and

thought them lamentations of the spirits that wander at night.

A very pretty episode in bird-life attracted our attention near a marsh mill. Three swallows excitedly flew overhead, two of them quarrelling in a very energetic fashion, the third not exactly acting as umpire but, all the same, as having some interest in the contest. In and out and round and round the three of them flew, now high, now low, then to the millside and back to the river; when suddenly one of them flew off at a tangent, worsted and discomposed, the couple going millwards, chattering as in high glee. There seemed to me something of a peculiarly human touch in this little comedy, which certainly did not end in an avine divorce court, but rather suggested a phase of the Unwritten Law.

At long last the tide turned, and we were running merrily before a draught of wind that increased the more, the farther we left the "heights" of Reedham behind us; so much so, that we bowled along to the drawbridge with sufficient impetus for the skipper, who stood on the bows to lower sail and lift the mast, and so shoot under the leaves of it, to pop it into its place again beyond the bridge, without losing way; and so to the Waveney, and round the point, and into Meen's Dyke, to moor beside the house-boat, "Moorhen II," the headquarters of my small fleet.

CHAPTER XII

BREYDON IN 1755

All nature appears fresh, and every animal seems to rejoice at this time : jet-black weaver-birds, with bright yellow crests, fly-catchers, bee-eaters, and humming-birds, of beautifully bright iridescent colours, flit about from bush to bush . . . whilst flamingos, pelicans, herons, and beautiful light blue cranes, with ibis-curlews, and waders of different kinds, may be seen winging their flights in long lines to their feeding-grounds.

—"THE OLD SHEKARRY."

How the bundle of torn and almost indelible manuscript which purports to be the diary of one Sylas Hardley came into my possession matters not ; for its authenticity I am not prepared to argue. But from a careful perusal of certain entries I dare make assertion that the diarist's observations on birds and fish read truthfully and beyond doubt. The items reproduced have been confined to matters which make an excellent supplement to the preceding chapter :

"1755. May 14th. Having dined well at the 'Duke's Head' with certain kindred spirits—natives of Yarmouth—I repaired to Cob Holme, situated over the quaint wooden bridge, there to meet one 'Hernser' Smith, a wild-fowler, who, with his flat-bottomed scow, I had hired to go a-shooting on the marshes and saltings. Cob Holme is a wild, desolate, but to an ornithologist, an interesting area

of some 27 acres of boggy land, more saltings than marsh or fen; and notwithstanding it hath for protection from spring tides a mound, or wall, of clay, faced with flints on the water side, it doth not prevent occasional floodings during wintry gales. This area, and a vaster beyond, of swamps and pools interspersed with sedge clumps and a wilderness of reeds and marsh plants, swarms with plovers in their season, and many other species of water- and swamp-loving birds, most notably a kind of seagull, small and beautiful, called a 'cob,' which hath a smoke-brown hood in the nuptial season, and like all gulls hath not a pure white tail until the adult stage hath come to it. This fact hath led to the Holme (a low land, or flat island near a river) being named Cobholme, or Cobham. Be that as it may, vast flocks of sea-fowl consort thither chiefly during the period of the herring fishing, or its approach.

"In Smith's scow, with him and two flint-lock fowling pieces we left Lady Haven Cut for the broad of Breydon, passing certain wherries and keels, the latter laden with oaken timbers for building of the King's ships, corvettes being constructed on local shipyards.

"The saltings, or rather 'ronds' as the natives term them, on the waterward side of the 'walls' [*Dutch* = dykes] appear strangely as if they had been (and no doubt are) slicings from the mainland beyond the walls, called marshes. And these ronds continue, more or less irregular, and serpentine, of outline (due to the abrasion of the waters), on the north side to the Yare, and on the south side to the Waveney, at Burgh Castle. Creeks [*Local* =

drains], finger-like, vein these ronds, which do drain the tidal water on the ebb. These also have great fringes of reeds and rushes; and the velvety grass upon these ronds is brightened by the sea scurvy grass in spring, and the richly coloured Michaelmas daisy in autumn.

"These ronds harbour many water-hens and rails, also various sedge birds, and reed-pheasants [bearded tits], whilst kingfishers, which few gunmen do shoot, fly around, dashing into the brackish waters for small gobies and herring-syle, and, I bethink me, shrimps not a few, which they depart with in their mandibles, in order to beat them upon some stump or convenient flintstone beneath the walls, and so, being dead, do devour them. This Halcyon bird of the Ancients nesteth in rat holes in Burgh Castle.

"By my orders Smith had not brought his punt-gun, which swivelles on an arched thwart across his boat, and belcheth forth some eight ounces of leaden slugs at one discharge, for I had come hither to observe rather than to destroy. Hence a 'sord' of mallards, and a 'dopping' of sheldrakes we passed by harmlessly, greatly to Smith's regret, although smaller game troubled him but little, as only table birds attract much these hardy men. Several sandpipers, both common and 'black' [*Totanus ochropus*] were flushed, and one of the latter was pursued by a red-footed hobby, which, at the moment, rose above the wall. Many ringed dotterel [plovers] chortled musically on the ronds, lifting on high their pointed wings, as they pirouetted around their mates. Several of those pretty birds called turnstones were also observed; some of them

turning over the dry weeds at the water-mark, and pursuing certain sea-lice [*Orchestria littorea*] that jumped from under when disturbed. It was strange how resting turnstones, gay as they be, with ruddy tints and striking plumage, should escape one's eye until a movement on their part is made. And even then, if one turns away, and then looks back again, it is not seldom one faileth at first to locate them: and it is so with many waders.

"Skylarks sang loudly over the marshes, filling the air with music. Reed-sparrows, with black heads and throats, trilled their stammering loud songs from many a reedy perch; and titlarks cheeped from every post of vantage by the walls, or as they flitted around their nests in the marshy tussocks beyond the walls. And even in so unexpected a neighbourhood the cuckoos cried lustily: one of these, with chuckling notes, as in glee, or in cynical mood, alighted on a faggot thrust in the soil, near unto a titlark's nest, the old birds much protesting by note and action, and they were exceeding perturbed.

" 'Let me shoot the furriner!' said Smith, with an oath prefixed, and pointed his fowling piece at it. I made no objection, and he straitway fired at and killed the bird, then strode across the rond to retrieve it. On handing it to me I observed the mouth to be full of yolk and a crushed shell—undoubtedly belonging to the titlarks; and, moreover, on slitting its abdomen with my quill-pen knife, I found in the oviduct an egg of its own, ready for extrusion, and other eggs in various stages of development, to, at least, the number of twelve.

"Various wading and other fowl passed over or



SOME LITTLE BREYDONERS

around us as the rising tide, or some other disturbing element, drove them off the flats; or on their way to some still uncovered 'lumps,' or to the marshes to rest a while, until at tidefall the higher portions of the flats shall be bared again. 'Knobs' of wigeon, 'trips' of dunlins and knots, flew restlessly around, whilst sandmartins and swallows streaked the view in all directions with their dartings and flights. As we rowed among the few patches of flats remaining uncovered, keeping ourselves well in the deeper drains, it was interesting to observe dunlins probing the ooze, and drawing therefrom tiny red many-legged worms [*Nereis*], with which they trotted prettily to the water's edge to rinse before swallowing them; whilst mature knots, in their nuptial attire of brick red, and the last year's young still in the grey, picked out the same abounding worms, but troubling not to wash them of the ooze. Smith declared knots to be excellent eating, and fain would have slaughtered some, only that his flint missed fire, and he must needs screw in another, and re-prime the pan of his piece.

"A couple of yarwhelps [black-tailed godwit] crying lustily their puppy-like yells of *tu-ee-lu-oo-e*, rose ahead of our boat, their contentious protests startling into flight a flock of quite two-score bar-tailed godwits, all of them 'in the red,' and four more of their own species a-feeding with them. These all hurriedly flew away, catching up with them a party of even more noisy redlegs [redshanks], who are never loth to create a sensation upon the slightest pretext, their yapping *cluey-cluey-cle-cle-cle* putting an instant scare into others a full mile

away. These all swept towards the marshes, where,
as saith Drayton,

By some ditch's side, or little shallow lake,
Lie dabbling night and day the palate-pleasing *Snite*,
The *Bidcocke*, and with them the *Redshanke* that delight
Together still to be, in some small reedy bed,
In which these little fowls in summer time were bred.

"In the meantime many black terns tripped over the waters, snapping up insects that floated, on their way, all making in a northerly direction for Upton Broad, where they annually nest. A bunch of shoulard ducks [shovellers], with broadened bills, bibbled gaily among the wrack-weeds, scooping up small living shells. And as we lay a-watching them, through my perspective glass, a large hawk or falcon, swift of wing as an eagle, and exceeding graceful in flight, encircled abovehead ; suddenly singling out one fowl as they took to precipitate flight, it doubled after it to and fro hot-foot, when, as by a lightning stroke of taloned feet, brake its neck, and before it touched the water, limp and bedraggled, the falcon had stooped and clutched it in its talons, bearing it ashore to the wall to devour it.

"We saw but two gunners afloat, their quest being water-fowl of saleable proportions and of acknowledged excellence of meat, most of the wading birds being rank of flesh, it being spring-time ; but for all of these they had better market in winter, when they were fat, and kept the better for the cooler air. In all directions one saw lordly herons from the tree-tops of Reedham and Fritton woods, some standing motionless asleep, leg deep

in water, having become surfeited of small eels and flat fishes [flounders]; others stalked solemnly in the shallows, an-hungred, or for food for the squabs in the tree-tops at home; and yet others were a-wing statelily betaking themselves to more promising fishing grounds. Clamouring redshanks were everywhere, for they nest in abundance on the Bure marshes beyond Breydon. And even when at ease they chatter and nod their heads petulantly to the tune. And there were a few cormorants, mostly young ones of a dusky hue, perched upon stakes near deeper water, some preening their feathers, others with wings a-hanging, until they had assumed an M-shapen figure, the wings being represented by the outside strokes of it.

"At full tide we had rowed and drifted well across Breydon, and as it turned, we put up the mast and spread the spritsail, having a fairly quick run home, notwithstanding we had frequently to tack. . . .

"*May 15th.* Left my fowling piece at home this day, but at Smith's request consented to allow him to ship his own. We brought with us a bottle or so of refreshment, and some comestibles, my man contending that Breydon provoked appetites. The clinking of caulkers' tools sounded musically over the waters from the shipyards; as did the squawking of gulls stooping and squabbling for broken fishes, thrown from the fishing boats, that floated upstream. As we turned the Half-mile point Smith pointed to a large bird perched upon a stake. 'A fishing-hawk!' he said, 'jest watch him!' The bird was preening his feathers, all the time watchful upon what was going on in the clear green water below

him, which seemed to abound with life. Presently he stood alert, rose high in the air, then for a space hovered, kestrel-like, and in an instant had plunged bodily into the stream, making an abundant splash and commotion, but not disappearing; and as quickly was a-wing again, holding in his talons either a sea perch [bass] or a mullet, with which he returned to his post, and began to tear in pieces and devour. Smith said that he had once seen four of these ospreys upon as many stakes, and two on the wing.

"The greater gulls did not seem to mind him, but stood a bit apart, aloofly, yet ready to rush for any fragments the fish-hawk would discard after his meal, and to quarrel with each other for possession.

"There came athwart the mud-flats sounds as of yesterday, for birds were still on migration. We rowed to the wall, a mile or so beyond Cobholm, and went ashore, each of us with a pole of some length, toed at the foot, which resisted the ooze below when it was necessary for us to vault ditches, or pulk-holes of not too wide a diameter. Red-shanks, lapwings, and snipes were nesting in abundance; curlews and whimbrel clamoured in a great tumult of noise, to which were added the cries of other waders besides those already mentioned. We found pewits' eggs in hollows and beneath the tussocks, mostly brownish, with black spots thickly besprinkling them. In the season, said Smith, hundreds were gathered for the markets, but did not appear to diminish the species; and so long as gunmen were few, and the marshes left undrained, nature would protect many of the birds. He would

have it that stoats and rooks besides black crows purloined a multitude of eggs, and that black-backed gulls also condescended to thieve with them, and even devoured the young birds.

"He pointed out to me some black curlews [glossy ibis], which, he said, nested occasionally; and I saw the birds distinctly through my glass; also a few couples of black-tailed godwits, noisy birds, in all conscience. I also espied a couple of avocets, not more, although it may be odd females were pursuing the duties of incubation, whilst their mates were probably feeding with whimbrels and curlews upon the mud-flats. Smith said that the marshes beyond Breydon, that spread for many miles, had an abundant population of water-fowl and waders upon them, which I can quite well believe; and it was not rare to see half a dozen spoonbills any summer day in May upon the mud-flats; and as for cranes and grey plovers, he had seen several of the former, and vast flocks of the latter, which, however, rarely alighted on the marshes. He assured me that these plovers wore black vests in spring, and white ones in winter—a fact which I assured him I already was aware of, and that it seemed to me to be a very human touch of nature. This remark puzzled him. He also communicated the fact that woodcocks had not rarely bred in the neighbourhood; and as for teal and tufted ducks, he had known them also. And as we later sailed homewards he talked interestingly of vast hordes of web-footed and other wild birds that swarmed in the neighbourhood.

"I have not yet referred to ruffs and reeves, which I actually saw upon little mounds beside

ditches, now as if dozing, now all alive, as if expecting a visit, which, as I lay upon the grass watching them through my perspective glass, certainly ensued, for came four ruffled birds, two with a sandy-hued ruff, one with black streaks and spotted with white, and the other richly empurpled. They bowed to each other, like gallant little gentlemen, and then commenced to invite a quarrel, meanwhile performing some grotesque manœuvres, stooping, fluttering, thrusting with bills, and parrying with them. A couple of bantam cocks would have ignored such feeble attempts at damaging an opponent; and for all the fuss and display, I did not see a feather pulled, and whenever one seized a tiny carbuncle upon another's beak-base it had not sufficient nipping power to draw blood from it.

"Now a couple of reeves would drop into the arena and look on passively, their indifference seemingly adding fuel to the fiery feelings of the combatants; then off they flew, probably to watch another batch of disputants, as vastly amused at the fuss they made to win their affections. This, too, I whispered to Smith, had a very human touch, at which he said 'Jist so, sir, as you say!' Then an odd bird would jump into the air, quite a foot off the ground, but it meant nothing; and presently with a common impulse the whole party would take to wing, adjourning the quarrel *pro tem.*, or until they had a better mound or hillock in view, with a greater interest shown in the *mêlée* by a hoped-for larger audience of the ladies. . . .

"May 16th. Smith left the gun at home this afternoon and sail'd the scow up channel to a party of mulleters, who were about to take up

their mullet-nets; in reality, to take them down. The tide as well as the hour was somewhat later than yesterday, and the water was fast drawing off the flats. I noted that a stake-net had a somewhat small mesh, and which was fronted and backed by two other nets of a vaster mesh. For this reason: when a mullet came into contact with the net, he naturally pushed it, himself passing through the large mesh, and bagging himself in the lint as he drave through the outer mesh. Here we observed some struggling in the meshes, others hanging dead, having been suffocated: two sea perch of 4 lb. weight, a few medium sized bream, and a jack of 3 lb., besides several flat fishes and a host of shore crabs. The freshwater fishes had come downstream on the ebb, as frequently happens, for in the finer months the salt tides do not travel far upstream; indeed, it is remarkable, although not after all a matter of astonishment, how equable the tides be, and will so remain so long as the bar at the harbour mouth acts as a dam to the incoming tide. Nor will this be altered (which the Breydon men do not want) until the north breakwater at Gorleston extendeth beyond the south pier.

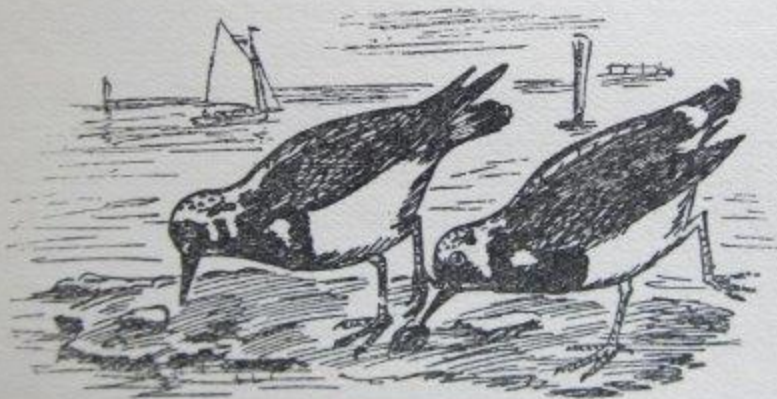
"After we had chatted a while with the mulleters, we rowed towards a couple of smelt-catchers, who were plying their trade with a small meshed draw-net. It was interesting to see them surround, and finally draw ashore upon the muds scores of aromatically-scented smelts, which some say is comparable to the aroma of cucumbers, and not untruly. Then we watched some eelmen stabbing the ooze with pronged flat picks, bringing forth fine eels a-coiling round the deadly weapon; and finally visiting some

babbers fishing with clots of worms, to which heedless eels hung unexpectedly as their toothed jaws became entangled in the threads or worsted.

"And then we made for the Lady Haven once more, much pleased to have seen this remarkable estuary."

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Here the entries finished, for quite a number of leaves had been badly torn ; and the entries that followed referred not to Breydon.



TURNSTONES

CHAPTER XIII

ON NORWICH RIVER

For the rest the life that we were leading had become a sort of second nature, and we found it by no means disagreeable. We ate with healthy appetites, and when night came, stretched on our matting, we heedlessly let the wind fold its wings, or shriek into madness, whilst the river either murmured gently along like a stream across the green meadow, or lashed itself into fury like a lion.

—PEREZ TRIANA.

TRIANA was a fugitive politician, fleeing from a national disturbance in his own State—"Down the Orinoco in a Canoe." The new life appealed strongly to him, as do the Norfolk Broads to holiday folk, who come to them jaded, to leave them regretfully; in his case to "write a book," little known in this country, but well worth a perusal. In *his* instance he had always the ebbing tide to move him along, with an occasional hurricane, alligator, or rattlesnake to relieve the monotony of the everlasting forest, through which he and his Indians drifted. He had music, too, for tapirs, pumas, and wild boars haunted the vicinity of his nightly "pitch," leaving their spoor (footprints) upon the banks to cheer him: a few rabbits, an occasional hare, or even an otter would have enlivened our own adventure or even a little shrieking of the wind.

Wind! indeed, we got so little of it that every

slant, puff, flutter, and breeze of it was treated as a gift from heaven, to be logged as carefully as the records of other events. Wednesday (22nd) was an idling day, taken up in rambling through wooded lanes, and in overhauling lazarette and stores. The only Nature incident of the day was the finding, by my young friend Hindes, of a dead young rabbit, probably the victim of a stoat, under whose unpleasant carcase laboured equally evil-smelling *Necrophorus*—burying beetles—busily lowering it into its early grave. What sleuths are these insects, what marvellous powers of scent they possess, to nose out a dead thing furlongs away, and to follow it up the scent; and dropping from a-wing, one after another, to share in the work of egg-laying, the larvæ from which, feeding in the dark consume the carcase in a very short space of time. A certain naturalist had seen a large sheep stripped to the bones in three days; on one occasion I turned over a poacher's dead greyhound, to discover a swarm of these beetles doing their level best to entomb it, but it seemed a task beyond their powers and perseverance.

At four on Thursday, freshly shorn and shaven, Captain Kettle stepped aboard again and took command, quite resigned now to the vagaries of the elements, that carried or drave us. We did the Cut on the last of the ebb, finding the Yare still at ebb, as we rounded the corner and steered for Reedham again: as was usual, tide—wrong; wind—cut off by the higher ground; patience—abiding. Fortunately, two Reedham friends espied us, and came in their boat to tow us to the so-called public staithe—a more disreputable row of decayed

timbers, with raw boltheads, and a wickeder quay, cannot be found by yachting folk in the whole of Broadland. It cannot have been repaired since Lodbrog the Dane landed here, to make a jumble of English History, and send down the ages a weirdly mythical story.

Sir Henry Spelman's story is probably as good as mine: he relates how Lothbrock (my Lodbrog) made a forced landing here, in A.D. 870, when driven ashore by a great gale, that sprang up suddenly on the Jutland coast, when he was out alone with his falcons, harassing the gulls and guillemots. Why he did not make Yarmouth was because Yarmouth's very site was as yet under the sea, and Fuller, the fisherman, had not yet been born. The gale had practically spent itself as he, sopped and exhausted, hitched a painter to a stump on Reedham quay, much to the astonishment of the village policeman; who, after demanding his name and business, marched him off to a guardroom, the neighbourhood then being under martial law; and Edmund, King of East Anglia, being then in residence, very soon heard of his coming. My special historian assured me that there was a falconer in the boat, named Ludkins, who was found lying exhausted in the billage; and he, too, was taken ashore, and questioned. He produced two skuas, and a cormorant, which had been three-parts devoured raw; and a couple of peregrine falcons, as witnesses to the harmless intentions of his master. The king made quite a fuss over the two adventurers, giving them much liberty.

But Lodbrog, with the swagger of a junker, soon made enemies; and Berne, the King's gamekeeper,

caught him one day with a brace of pheasants in his bag, which he had been requested not to interfere with ; and later he badly mauled one of Lord S——'s gamekeepers, which was afterwards denied in the "Daily Mail," and moreover, he spoilt his reputation by indulging much too freely in the strong Norfolk ales in the "Lord Nelson." Such pranks and ill-behaviour from an alien noble so exasperated Berne, that the latter managed to fire his musket, as it were by an accident, the contents of it lodging in Lodbrog's head, knocking out a lot of nonsense, with his brains. I think my historian's tale quite as likely as Spelman's ; as well as his supplementary information that spies wired the news to Copenhagen ; and the outcome of it was, that the Danish generals Hinguer and Hubba mustered up 20,000 men, who sailed over, burning for revenge, and ravaged East Anglia, ruling the country for many years after.

At Reedham we met several old friends, and spent a pleasant evening going the rounds to their several homes, in one being initiated into the mysteries of stack building in the farm-yard, my friend insisting that he had the largest stack in the two counties. And we were escorted home to bed aboard the "Walrus" at a rather late hour. Reedham is a pretty village, whose dainty bungalows, set in apple- and flower-gardens, snugly shelter under a sandy hanger that was undoubtedly a sea-cliff when sea-waves rolled over the present marsh country, bearing the fleets of Roman Cæsars. There is yet room for more habitations, when the shabby old maltings come down.

P.S.—The village boasts in holidaying days a butcher's shop.

On Friday morning a rollicking flood tide was slapping the small waves at our hull, which made the "Walrus" strain at her moorings. So, off we went at a famous pace, right gladly showing our gait to a sailing wherry almost abreast of us, for we were no laggards on a liberal breeze, and could kick up a foamy wake at our heels with the best of them. The good old Yare's flood was innocent of weeds, a great contrast to the condition of things in 1919, when even the good punt "Yarwhelp" could scarce move for them: and all the time we sailed its waters, we did not collect sufficient weeds to make a respectable cabbage or a green bouquet. Put in at Cantley to have a brief look round at the sugar factory, which was a busy hive of men, with whom we quite agreed that it would be a famous thing if enough beet could be grown to keep the machinery going all year round.

Looked in at Newstead's boat-shop, and revelled in the timbers and shavings of a fine and fascinating art, and the smell of planed oak. Off again, only to lose the breeze which was becoming strangled by the wind-baffling trees near Buckenham ferry; but by a stroke of luck, Newstead, himself now afloat, overtook us in a motor-boat, and gave us a pluck to Coldham Hall, with its green woody reaches, and fleets of gay house-boats, all of them more or less occupied by very wise tenants.

It does not appear to be fashionable to go near to Norwich by yachts, for reasons I need scarcely mention; and interest seems to cease beyond

Whitlingham. So, as on my last excursion (in the punt), I trained to the pleasant old city to rummage the old book-shops, always worth the trouble, and to loiter in the market-place among the numerous, and unconscious wags of quacks and hand-sellers. I love the fringe of a gaping crowd.

It was a stuffy and no pleasant day, the atmosphere depressing, the skies gloomy as if it had been November, when, as the "Eastern Daily Press" next day had it—"Norwich became so overcast, that the darkness of the city caused shops and offices everywhere to turn on the electric light. Some rain fell." Nature verily cried. Never in all my years afloat was daylight so early murdered: or the dampness of the atmosphere, during the night that followed, so dense and condensed—in August. My cabin ceiling and walls ran water. But we took no harm, as we had left the cabin doors open. I tried to recall any or all my favourite poets who had dealt with such a sort of phenomena, for one is glad to think in the dark; but every one had evaded it,—perhaps it does not inspire, like "Evening Rainbows" (Southey); "Moonlight Evenings" (Byron); "Twilights" (Montgomery); "Hymns to the Moon" (Ben Jonson); or "Waterspouts" (Camoens). Perhaps a waterspout would have cleared the air! The only one who came within an ace of it was William Shakespeare who, in "Sunrise after a Dark Night," most dispiritedly wrote:

Know'st thou not

That when the searching eye of heaven is hid
Behind the globe, and lights the lower world,
Then thieves and robbers range unseen,
In murders, and in outrage, bloody here.

Naturally enough I pulled over the blankets, shutting them out!

Our Brundall Cut, where we lay moored, was shallow, tree-sheltered, gay with house-boats, pleasant for company; and swarming with baby roach, that flashed in the morning like silvery herring-syle. Surely there ought to be sizable fish in abundance in the river, with such myriads of infants in the shallows. Yet we passed no anglers a-fishing to-day, nor yesterday: what hath come to Yare? Was the river cleaner and sweeter when I was a kiddy fishing for perch at Reedham ferry; or peering into certain wherry-holds, under moist sacks and among ice, where great bream and roach lay stiff and silvern by the hundredweight—aye! and ton—when my old friend "Flea" Barber, of river-poaching fame, and another or two bold spirits roamed the floods by night, and boxed and barrelled sent their netted freights by day by rail to Leeds, and other cities, where Jews abound, and who hold no opinions against anglers' ethics, or "muddy owd bream"; and, taking heed to Moses, and loving fishes scaled, obey his behest that "all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers . . . shall be an abomination" (Lev. ii. v. 9). But for the poachers no Norfolk fish has passed their lips.

What times legitimate fishers once had in Norwich streams; when as in September, 1817, two Norwich gentlemen caught 400 fish by angling in one day; and in August, 1811, "between 6 a.m. and 5 p.m., two persons caught by angling, near Buckenham ferry, 132 lb. of perch, bream, and roach." Another couple took 210 lb., mostly bream, in one day.

The first Norfolk angling match recorded, took place on August 18th, 1859, near Reedham, in Limpenhoe reach, for prizes given by the late C. J. Green : " Total weight of fish taken by 28 competitors, in 8 hours,—16 stone 7 lb. 1 oz. First prize, 33 lb. 3 oz."

In November, 1870, came "*Greville F.*" to Buckenham, with his henchman Harry Crystal ; finding a " swim " at the " Three Horse Shoes," they planted " spoles," fishing stern to the reeds, in 5 feet of water, using gentles as bait. " We had a bite," he wrote, " mostly a fish at every swim, and having filled the bag, we emptied the luncheon basket, and filled that." Commencing at twelve noon, and leaving off at four p.m., they mustered a bushel of fish. To-day something has gone wrong with the works !

A perusal of my " Notes," on the downstream return to Reedham, offers little to enlarge upon, and are briefly thus : Started before noon—Coldham beautiful for colour as ever, a wherry in every picture ; a picture in every wherry—the rippled waters creased with sun-gleams—a native Venus, beside a painted boat, dipping her can in the mirror-like water, her reflection and pose a picture—a few weeds, like lost doormats, accompanying us downstream, but no nuisance—moorhens trotting upon massed weeds gathered in reedy bights—temperature 75 degrees at 4 p.m.—at 5, tead in a Rockland dyke, at a pretty corner—the Broad wild but beautiful, in its setting of rank reeds—went to the pub, hoping to see " Scientific " of Dr. Emerson, and Dutt.

The old fellow passed us hurrying along, on some

bit of wild sport bent ; and my efforts to hold and pump him failed : had I possessed a pewter baiting, I think I could have hooked him, for the wildest pikes fall to the lure of spoon-baits, made bright. I thought he looked a venerable old chap, if not prepossessing ; nor was his battered old punt, which looked a veritable sieve. The last time I saw him we chatted on the river, but water does not much seem to inspire him ; and for all his escapades and adventures he had no real ready wit, nor gift of spicy yarning. And that short, spasmodic " Ha ! ha ! " of his, savours a little too much of fatuous ego.

He told Dr. Emerson of shooting ospreys (fish-hawks) ; of the way they chose a post of observation, rising and hovering like a kestrel, before a swoop at a fish ; and its prey was always pike : he shot one with a 3 lb. jack in its talons. He told the doctor that he was known as " Chizzles," having been a carpenter ; but if that ratty old punt, and rattier house-boat of his be average samples of his output,—he might have been an antique cabinet-maker. His environment is as nature—wild as himself. But Emerson's word-picture of him in his " On English Lagoons " is honestly worth reading.

Two natives rowing hard on some mysterious errand among the reedy islands, which I think was also of some interest to Chizzles, passed us a joke about the ancient. We had a pretty bit of sailing on the broad for a little while, and then shot through one of the many dykes that drain it, to the river. Then the wind grew tired—reached Cantley at 6.45—a noisy crowd of rooks among the tall tree-

tops—wind baffled by the trees, so crab-clawed around one long bend of reeds—wherries lying to for the night—Reedham ferry at sunset—a clear sky creased with a few bars of golden—reached Reedham in the gloaming, and laid to for the night ourselves. . . .

No cinema—church closed—no clubs—no glaringly lighted parade—no public library—only a public-house, or two—no flappers—no opera house—no labour spouters—no jail—nothing.

So we repaired to the big room at the "Lord Nelson" where Reedham's public men foregather. It was crowded; and I saw life. A church organist presided ably at the piano, and played national airs, snips from operas, and catchy tunes. The company drank little, but smoked much; and as soon as the fog bethickened unduly, the hero of the evening went back to his "Walrus," and so to bed.

A merry party, from a wherry yacht next door to us, set their gramophone a-going, and danced to its melodies, to the delight of the village constable, who hath an ear for music. . . .

Then silence reigned supreme; and in the early morning—Sunday—we passed through Haddiscoe "Straits" to the "Moorhen's" lair at St. Olaves, spending the day without incident.

CHAPTER XIV

BY WILLOW-TREE WATERS

I could see the sun out at one or two holes, but mostly it was big trees all about, and gloomy in there amongst them. There were freckled places in the ground where the light sifted down through the leaves, and the freckled places swapped about a little, showing that there was a little breeze up there. A couple of squirrels sat on a limb and jabbered at me very friendly.

—HUCKLEBERRY FINN.

OUR run up the sombre Waveney on Monday afternoon afforded no excitements. We had a steady enough breeze for the first few miles, as we ambled along between dense, lank reeds, that fringed the river sides interminably; and but for the frequent windings the river's monotony would have been somewhat depressing. A mill or two, and glimpses at Friesland cattle, now becoming so popular in East Anglia, occasionally refreshed the eye, but of floating company we had none. It seems to me that Bure is Bure, and Waveney is Waveney, and only on rare occasions do natives leave their own rivers; and it is only when systematic Broadland tourists insist on "doing" the Broads thoroughly or racing attracts, that this river is less lonesome. There obtains, of course, a little more liveliness at summer week-ends, when Beccles yachts go down to Oulton, and Oulton yachts sail up to Beccles. The only vessel that overhauled us was a hefty motor-boat, with a silent skipper aboard.

We passed with scant comment sloppy Burgh St. Peters, with its prospect that never cheers one ; the old church tower jars every artistic feeling I possess. We gave a hail to Wherryman Tooley, who was discharging coals at a pump-mill. That fellow appears always as cheery as a hermit-crab, that ever has its house—at home or abroad—to draw into.

When midway between St. Peters and Aldeby it occurred to me that tea would not come amiss, but found our methylated spirits had not been shipped. Here was a pickle to be in. However, we called at a little marsh farm-house squatted behind some trees, beside a water mill, where the good woman supplied us with enough to last us up to Beccles. We moored in the mill-deek, and brake our fasting.

A queer little lad drew up, and began to gossip in broadest Suffolk. Our unco' craft had set him wondering :

"Is thet *yar* bote?" he asked.

"Yes, of course," I answered.

"Did yow *copy* it?"

"No!"

"Whatter yow *call* it? It do fare a funny 'un!"

"I call it a 'Walrus'," I answered.

"Whasser Worlrust?" he wanted to know.

"Whoy, suffin arter a crocodile!" I replied.

"Ah! I ha' seed a crokkerdile in our schole boke," he went on. "I ha' got nine brothers and sisters, I hev."

"Any eggs?" I inquired.

"Yes, my mother ha' got sum eggs an' all. Dew yow wanten shillinther?"

"Yes, we'll be glad of them."

"Orlrite, I'll fetch 'um; our hins *dew* lay; they fare a-cackerlin *now*—a shillinther."

He came back with a half-dozen splendid eggs.

"We ha' gotter dorg, marster, tied up ner the mill," he volunteered: "a gun-dorg!"

"Whatever for?" I asked; "and I can hear him."

"Ter bark," he replied; "he bark wuss tied up, so I don't go near 'im; but he *dew* keep thieves off!"

"What do they steal?" said I.

"Nothin'," he replied; "theer arn't nothin' to steal."

And so we chatted, to be relieved when the good woman of the mill-house called all ten kiddies in to tea.

He was not exactly silly Suffolk, but came astonishingly near it. One flagrant Suffolkian comes to mind. Said he, to a chum who met him and asked what he had got in his handkerchief:

"Wal, Jim, bor, I ha' got sum makrel; an' if yow can tell me how many I ha' got, yow shell hev all five on 'em."

Jim thought a moment, and scratched his head; then replied, "*Five*."

"Wal, bor," said the other, handing them over, "that's a rummon; that's jist the werry number I hev got!"

In the grey of late eventide we rowed a little farther Aldebywards, and picking out as cosy a corner in the reeds as possible staked down. The swallows from the mill flew fitfully around in the mist, snatching midges and gnats for their suppers;

a flock of starlings, from their foray on the moist marshes, on rustling wings, passed over the tree-tops in a compact company, to drop in a chattering crowd among some dense rushes, where they gradually quietened down; and so swallows and starlings and crew settled down for the night's repose. And the mists thickened and blanketed down all nature. Hard by us, lost in the gloom, lay a wherry whose crew turned in with a cheery "Good night"; and all was as still as the grave. Silence reigned complete.

At nine next morning the mists melted and dispersed and rolled away, as if being shepherded by some unseen hand. Progress was slow, for every willow stole the wind that we wanted, so we put out the oars, giving them a rest as we came to each gap where a breeze would filter through. It looked extremely odd how the awakened swallows resorted to the tree-tops. We passed one sallow, on the topmost twigs of which these birds alighted in clusters, restlessly enough too for a swarm of insects had also chosen resting places thereamong.

Under a clear sky the translucent river slithered along almost without a ripple, and the trees that overhung it were reflected to the topmost leaves—a very beautiful effect, for the trees above and the trees below were equally distinct to the eye. Then there came a cat's-paw of wind, a perceptible rippling of the surface; the slim tree-tops waved rhythmically, and the reeds below nodded good-day to each other. And as through Aldeby Bridge and by curving ways the stream went, so did we—rejoicing in the lively awakening of the breeze.

At Boaters' Hill, Gillingham, we pulled up for

dinner and a pleasant yarn with a Lowestoft friend, who was a-holidaying too. When clambering the slope to get some milk at the farm a large ash-tree stump attracted my attention, and with my neck-tie I measured around it, just above the soil, and then its diameter, and on comparing lengths of tie with a tape measure in the boat, I found it 28 feet round, and 8 feet through it. The natives assured me that it had been felled for fear of falling on a cottage at its foot. And now for picturesque, sleepy Beccles, where no one appears in a hurry to live—or die. Here was exhibited the same old apathy, the same whimsically crooked streets, the same rich mellow artistic picture when viewed from the river in a sunny light, the same monotonous army of trees that meet the river near the town and escort it, by squads and companies, right away to Geldeston, and farther, along all its windings, as if afraid that the very breathing of summer winds through its leafy ways should mar its peacefulness. The very boaters rowed with apathetic habitude, and the people in the streets appeared to loiter rather than progress on the flagstones. I have wondered in my own mind if the little township's motto could be *Cogito, ergo sum*—"I think, therefore I exist."

After a jostle through the drowsy town I returned to the public apology for a yachting staithe, where nobody seems to moor, unless obliged to; and the skipper had orders to heave the rond anchor from its hole in the stone heap, and make for Geldeston. We literally sighed for a wind, and used our oars *à la smacksman*. A fellow leaned on the bridge to look at us; another turned his head

and turned it back again. On and on we crawled, more like slug than walrus, now to the right, now to the left, as the corners bent, "where the light sifted down through the leaves, and the freckled places swapped about a little"; and so until our arms alternatively ached; and the drowsy river, having seemingly repented its upward movement, stood still. Then it turned, with the haste of a land snail, and seemed to ask us, "Why your hurry?" so, finding that it did not look like reaching the lock that night, we "reversed our engine" and let the ship swing round, and being now wholly resigned let her go back upon an ebb that dawdled rather than ran; so, loafing and idling with a hand upon the tiller, we got back at some time or other to the staging again. Macgregor, in his "Voyage Alone in the Yawl Rob-Roy," describes a state of feeling under similar circumstances. Says he: "The effect . . . was to bring the mind and body into a curious condition of subdued life, a sort of contemplative oriental placid state, in which both cares and pleasures ceased to be acute, and the flight of time seemed gliding and even, and not marked by the distinct epochs which define our civilized life . . . perhaps a mollusc could affirm as much of its existence." O dodman of a walrus!

We snuggled down early, even as dusk fell upon the river, and the one weak lamp shot forth its feeble glow at the far end of the quay, not so much to guide late yachts-folk to their berths, but simply to warn pedestrians that a river runs hard by.

It rained determinedly through the night, and left most things limp and moist on the morning of

Tuesday; so I paid my shilling harbour dues, to a gentleman who seemed half apologetic in taking it, and actually handed me a receipt for it. We left the "Walrus" to take care of the staging, my skipper to train for Lowestoft, myself for Geldeston, where, on arriving, I strode away to the marsh road that shone with puddles and slopped with ooze, the only dry stretch of it being afforded by a native macadamizing of it with fathoms of potato-hulms, which was as soft as Turkey carpet. The only road to compare with it is at Caister West-End, on the way to Mautby, where I have seen the marsh road paved with decaying swede turnips.

Geldeston had long been a lure to me, and my first sight of it was like a well-rinsed water-colour. Over the lock gates rushed a sort of cascade, into the lower level, due to last night's heavy rain. It must be a beautiful corner of the Waveney under friendly skies, and even to-day a wherry load of artists were breakfasting where the yachts lie-to. Under to-day's unhappy sky was an effect they should be stealing, for of sunny Broadland pictures there seems some glut. Why so rarely a storm-cloud or a study of subdued lights?

I had a chat inside the old public-house, finding the landlord cheery. It stands in a ring of trees, and is so near the bank that it reflects itself in the clear waters. Inside, it offers a comfortable parlour, with a promising fireside around which, I'll warrant, forgather merry knots of labour-worn yokels when work has ceased, while many a story sends the loud laugh round.

The publican explained to me the working of the lock, and showed his simple eel-net, in shape, the

pattern of the trawl net ; the long square of its entry, with the cone-shaped net attached to it, and there you are ; and when the eels are running for the sea, and the backwaters are let through the side sluice, all the fish is expected to do, is to run into the cone of it, to be held there by the stream until the worker lifts and empties it.

Just as Richard Lubbock's description of a duck decoy is the best extant to this day, so Dr. Emerson in "On English Lagoons," gives us the most vivid word-picture of working the eel-net. In December, 1890, in bitter winterly weather, he lay here in the "Maid of the Mist" at Geldeston. On a pitch dark night the aged keeper tapped at his cabin window. "I have just drawn them nets, sir," he said, and showed the doctor thither with a lantern. Says Emerson, "A mass of beautiful silver eels lay wriggling at the bottom amongst the green weed, their backs seaweed green, their bellies shining like silver. They were in splendid condition, too, fat and frolicsome." There were 20 lb. of them. At 10.20 they made another sally. "I held the lantern over the roaring, foaming waters that shone with ghostly gleam against the black sky. The lock-keeper leant over the handrail and thrust his crome into the torrent, feeling for a pod. They were both swollen with fish. . . . He drew one of the pods upstream ; it was taut, and heavy with eels."

I could see that weird picture as I thought of Emerson's description, leaning over the rail. He could write vivid English when he was not facetious or puerile. Just fancy yourself there in pitchy darkness—a gloom intensified by the flickering

lantern—with the temperature at 39° F., emptying that unexpectedly large take of many stones of eels, running up to 3 lb. each, and at so late a period of the year, when, most old eelmen will tell you, in snowy water "they'd never heerd tell of sich a thing."

The publican, when asked of other fishes that came to his nets beside eels, mentioned a trout of 7 lb., and another "spotted beauty" much heavier, as well as a chub of 1 lb.—a fish which seems rare in the Waveney; indeed, Lubbock, in his "Fauna," speaks of it as "totally unknown in the Bure, the Yare, and, I believe, the Waveney; but of the higher part of this last river I am not sure." In April, 1890, when rowing on this river, at Bungay, I picked up a dead chub measuring 11½ inches in length, and was pleased to hear of this more recent example. The chub loves brisk waters, rather than lakes, wherein it does not greatly thrive; otherwise I would that they swarmed in the broads, to give anglers a change of sport, from hauling out the everlasting slimy bream, and endless processions of baby roaches. Otherwise the chub is no great loss, for its flesh is poor enough. Says Blakey: "Perhaps the best way of serving up the chub would be to imitate the Irish manager's method of performing 'Hamlet'—send up the richest receipt you can get, hot and piquant, *omitting the fish*."

A friend of mine had taken, by babbling, a nice lot of eels at Geldeston. Leaving them in the bucket on the bank, he turned in for a nap, to wake up in the morning to find a considerable quantity missing, and a dog skulking around suspiciously, its body remarkably distended: as

my informant remarked, "It stood out like a balloon." His suspicions being aroused, he called on the lock-keeper, who admitted his dog had a great liking for eels, devouring them alive. "Never mind," said he, "I'll get you some to make up for 'em," and at once set the net across the sluiceway, and made a scoop of half a stone of eels to replace the lost ones. The marshman's dog, like the broadman's sow, is often piscivorously inclined.

And now for dinner, and away again.



CHAPTER XV

THEN OULTON AND HOME

Thus thoughtfully we were rowing homeward, to find some autumnal work to do, and help on the revolution of the seasons. Perhaps nature would condescend to make use of us even without our knowledge, as when we help to scatter her seeds in our walks, and carry burrs and cockles on our clothes from field to field.

—THOREAU.

LATE on the morning of Tuesday, under a drizzling sky, we got under weigh again, taking the ebb with us, and making use of every favourable slant of wind, which, to its credit, behaved increasingly kindly as we got into the more open country. Very little excitement varied the run down, beyond a chat with the Aldeby bridge-man, and a dinner disposed of as we jogged along. At the Aldeby pump-house I ran the boat's nose into the bank and jumped ashore, attracted by the number of busy swallows dashing in and out of it. The two fellows at work with the engines in that lonely corner of Suffolk were glad enough of a chat with a stranger, and were only too pleased to talk of "their swallows," whose nests were stuck in most inconceivable niches and corners, some under rafters above the rattling machinery, others under the below-foot trap doors where we walked, and some actually hung suspended over a torrent of rushing waters that foamed but a foot or two below

them; and even in dusty black corners in the coal-shed, in a gloom that was almost as sable as the coals half-filling the area. Even as we looked and peeped around, the old birds flew in and out, certainly with a slight show of agitation, as they saw in me a stranger whom they had not become accustomed to.

Then off we set sail again, the "Walrus" showing her enjoyment at the brisk breeze that bellied the sail, and made the miles speed under her keel right merrily. This fresh of wind held us until we reached Oulton Dyke, up which, tack upon tack, against a still ebbing tide, we slapped the old tub along, now her port gunwale perilously near the water, and now the starboard side getting it right sloppily. Two or three yachts flew by with a favourable wind behind them, their owners merrily greeting us, and then subsiding into their cockpits, to see that their own sailing was above criticism from the two *voyageurs* who were fast becoming tolerable navigators and seamen! But the air was, to me, as cold as in winter: my fingers were benumbed, and I was chilled thoroughly.

We ran the old "Walrus" straight across the broad, and halted her at the bank at the extreme end of my good friend Everett's railings, hard by a grotesque but comfortable old house-boat, whose owner came out to caution us against the vagaries of the tidal shallows, where we had moored. This elderly gentleman suggested some original copy, but I soon discovered that he was not only a rung or two above an ordinary eelman's stature, but a man of some repute and standing in the world artistic, and remarkably well preserved for his age.

"Are you he who came here a while ago in the 'Yarwhelp' punt?" he asked.

I owned to it; and on his mentioning my name I asked for his.

"T. F. Goodall!" he answered.

"Bless me! I remember you in Dr. Emerson's 'Electra,' moored in 1890 in a Breydon drain. You painted the picture of Yarmouth; Emerson wrote 'Wild Life on a Tidal Water'!"

"That's it!" said he, as I jumped ashore for a hand-shake.

"And we've two of your paintings in Yarmouth Museum!" I said.

So we set to work to reminisate, going aboard to continue our chat—which was mostly his, and I assumed my usual rôle of listener when afloat. I had never credited the story in the doctor's book, of "Pintail" Thomas, whom he accuses of letting two or three gentlefolk drown from an overturned boat, whilst he (Thomas) stayed in his gun-punt sculling around after a curlew-sandpiper (*Tringa subarquata*) utterly heedless of the disaster. When Dr. Emerson expostulated with the little punt-gunner, the fellow merely remarked, "Well, sir, them warmin' don't know much about small boat sailin'—sarve 'em right, if they com up here and get drowned."

"That did happen," said Mr. Goodall, who went on with his chat on art, on pictures, and on many other things that were beloved of both of us.

The "Walrus" was herself again completely on these open waters, where a draught from the sea sets the moored yachts a-dancing and tugging at their lariats like frisky colts. So we let her run

again, to dodge in and out among the moored yachts that crowded the waters, more than one crew eyeing us askance as we approached alarmingly near, and then suddenly put her on to another tack in almost half her own length. With a good breeze the "Walrus" enjoys herself, and so does the skipper, who has learnt to know all her individual peculiarities. Really, we were hunting for the house-boat of my friend Carrodus, yachting specialist for the county paper.

Ere long we found him, and hitched our mooring rope to a buoy hard by, the "Walrus" at once putting her nose towards the sea breeze, to swing head to wind, as boats do at Oulton, and moving to meet it from whatever direction it chooses to come; or on the tide, if need be, in a calm. The dinghy "Florrie" had been left at St. Olaves, having been more of an encumbrance than a help, seeing that the mother-ship is but five feet longer than this small boat. Hence we had to hail Carrodus, who came over for us with his larger dinghy, and we spent an hour or so chatting in his cabin.

It was now dark, and the breeze had strengthened to half a gale, and even more, as a squall burst upon the broad, which churned up the waters, and made all the lighter craft ramp at their moorings. At ten it occurred to me that we might have still more stormy weather, so C. agreed to row us back to the "Walrus." But when a boat's length away we could make no progress at all, and we were drenched by the rainfall in a few moments. We had nothing to do but to spurt back to the house-boat, and there await the first lull, when we soon

got aboard our ship, to lie rocking the night long, wondering—at a more than usual gust—whether we should not be on a lee shore by morning—Carrodus's dinghy an' all; but we weathered it.

On Wednesday we were met by a fairly decent morning; so after breakfast all of us rowed to the "Commodore's" Staithe; the skipper betaking himself to Lowestoft Regatta, myself going to the Fishwharf for a whiff of the salt seaweed, and a smell of freshly landed sea fish. I was at home here, threading the lanes between piles of roker, and plaice, and codfishes, the first-named lying like soft slabs one upon the other, weeping slime from every pore as the wharfingers sorted, or packed them; the last-mentioned lying in contorted heaps, with mouths a-gasp as if death had overtaken them by painful suffocation, their great listless eyes coldly staring. Here were boxes of dabs, and there trunks of goggle-eyed haddocks, whilst heaps of the latter were being beheaded by strong wrists that wrenched head and body apart. Thick hearty turbot lay piled upon each other, meet dainties for aldermanic palates; and dainty soles that would have tempted the sorriest invalid to dine upon them without misgiving. I looked for sturgeon, porpoise, or any other uncommon catch, but none was there; nor mackerel nor sea trout; but grotesque "latchets" (sappharine gurnards), none too rotund, and some other common species varied the tons of "prime" and "offal." Two naked and headless species were dumped down upon the pavements, or half hidden in tubs—the sea-angler, and the dogfish, the latter bereft of skin and head and spines as well. There

remains to-day but scant call for dogs and "cats" (wolf-fish) and angler-fish (*Lophius piscatorius*), as obtained in war-time, when all was fish that came to the nets; not that they are less nourishing as then, but prejudice forbids their being sold knowingly, and in their jackets, to the populace. So, as fried fish or as smoked "Grimsby had-dock," they find their way still upon many a table, making the quaint old saying true that "What the eye does not see, the heart does not grieve over!" . . .

It is odd to me that one never sees the ordinary eel sold on the fish markets, those who capture them, as eelmen, preferring to send their catches straight to Billingsgate, or to private buyers: and in all my sailings around on this trip I saw but one solitary eel-babber, and he, being apparently very restless—in changing his "pitches"—suggested himself as the merest amateur; or that eels were not on the feed. Yet some of these waters teem with large eels. Not so long ago I went late one night to a certain private water and put in (with two boon companions) three dozen liggers, each baited with a small dead roach, whose bladder had been pricked by a bait-needle, so that it sank. A bit of flat wood, two inches by six, painted white, had five or six yards of strong twine wound round it, with the exception of some four feet; a hook, with a length of snood was attached to the end of this line by a peculiar half-knot or half-bow, an operation most difficult to explain, simple enough when once learnt, yet easy to forget.

These liggers were dropped at intervals, and left until morning, when soon after daybreak they were

retrieved, one man rowing, another searching for the floats, which on a slight ripple of water are difficult to distinguish: those that have not been visited by an eel seldom drift far from the spot where they had been thrown in. Occasionally a float was seen moving about, mysteriously, on the surface, and it went without saying it held a prisoner. A missing float naturally was sought for, and would be found at the side of the lake against the reeds or sedges, and almost invariably held a large eel, which had managed most likely to become entangled among the vegetation: if among reeds, it had to be left, but if ensnared among softer rooted sedges, it was not difficult to haul out, roots and eel together.

A little care had to be exercised in hauling in a 3 lb. eel, that had been hooked later than one which had become somewhat exhausted by a longer struggle. On bringing it to the surface a neat and dexterous lift into the boat prevented it catching its tail under the boat, as an eel invariably tries to do, and so make escape possible. A pull at the short end of the snood releases the hook, and down fall fish and snood into a box, to flop about for a bit, and then settle to threading itself in and under and among his chums already hauled in. A dozen fat eels, ranging from 2 lb. to 3 lb. weight was not a bad capture; and there was something, if not exactly sporty, about a lingering escapade, that had at least a poacher-like flavour, seeing the fun takes place at either end of night, and still waters have a quieting effect upon those busily occupied in the adventure.

There was always a fascination about the habits

of eels for me ; something bewitching about their haunts as well as the exercising of the various methods of their capture, whether by eel-set, spear, or bab, or ligger, or nightline ; or by whipping. I have tried the latter on a Norfolk broad with some success ; a long willow wand is stuck in a shallow spot, with a line and baited hook attached to it. It was odd early next morning to see two or three lines rotating around their individual rod, that, from its springiness, " gave and took," with no fear of a breakage.

Ancient Ælian seems to have enjoyed the sport of catching eels, but his methods would not make appeal to a modern angler : he tells us an eel-fisher would use some cubits length of a sheep's intestines, throwing it in the water, the eel seizing the nether end. He then blows in it, the gut swelling and so is held by the fish's teeth ; hardly so pleasant an experience as that of the Saxon boys, whom our forefathers chastised with whips made of eel-skins, a punishment evidently learnt from the Roman, whose boy looked upon eels as a scourge for the body rather than as a dainty for his palate. And for all the excellent stews eels will make, their capture and handling become more or less of a penance. From a recent " Fishing Gazette " I culled the following :

SONG OF HATE FOR EELS.

Oh, the slimy, squirmy, slithery eel !
He swallows your hook with malignant zeal,
He tangles your line and he gums your reel,
The slimy, squirmy, slithery eel.

Oh, the slimy, squirmy, slithery eel!
 He cannot be held in a grip of steel,
 And when he is dead he is hard to peel,
 The slimy, squirmy, slithery eel.

Oh, the slimy, squirmy, slithery eel!
 The sorriest catch in the angler's creel;
 He never was fit for a Christian meal,
 The slimy, squirmy, slithery eel.

Oh, the slimy, squirmy, slithery eel!
 Malevolent serpent! Who dares reveal
 What eloquent fisherman say and feel
 Concerning the slimy, slithery eel?

It was now time to 'bout ship for the home waters, and bring the voyage to an end. After sundry calls upon friends, we hoisted sail again, and fairly rollicked off the broad to the Waveney on a lusty breeze, that carried us without a grumble to Haddiscoe bridge, which shut in our faces, and was closed so long, that we wearied of tacking up and down—for a solid twenty minutes, during which time the wind, true to itself, gave out, and in a remarkably short time it had become an absolute calm, forcing us to creep at a sickly snail's pace between the wooden bridge piles, and even slower than that in accomplishing the last five hundred yards, to the "Moorhen's" ditch-cut. So ended the slowest Broadland expedition I ever accomplished. But who grumbles? The time had sped pleasantly, one's health had been improved upon, and if patience be one of the highly esteemed

Virtues, I had learnt to become, at least, passably moral!

And I still agree with the poet Channing that

The river calmly flows
Through shining banks, through lonely glen,
Where the owl shrieks, though ne'er the cheer of men
Hath stirred its mute repose,
Still if you should walk there, you would go there again.



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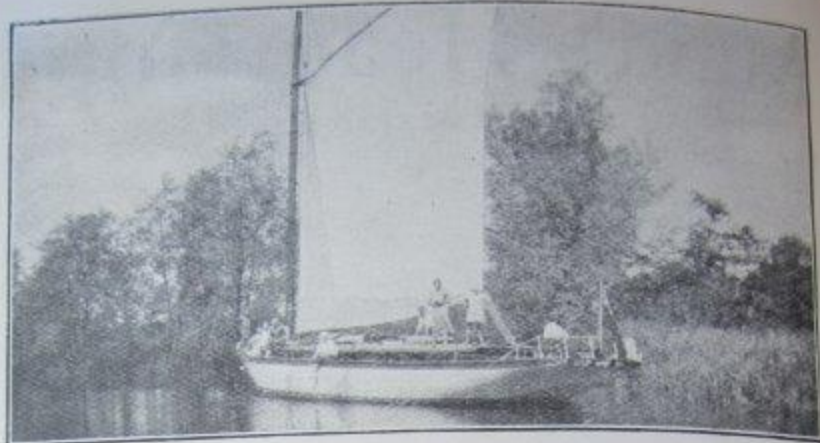


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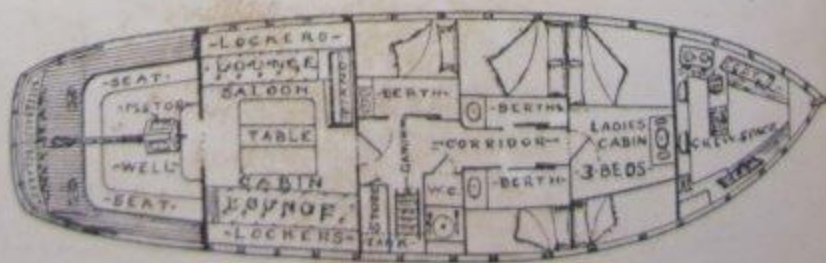
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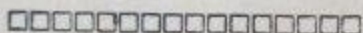
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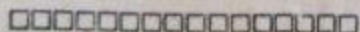
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